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Haslett, William, 1766-1821.

The advices and meditations



THE
ADVICES
AND

MEDITATIONS

OF THE LATE

WILLIAM HASLETT, ESQUIRE;

CONSISTING OF

- I. AN ADDRESS TO THE CLERGY AND CHRISTIANS OF ALL DENOMINATIONS, WITH SOME DISCRIMINATIVE MARKS OF GRACE.
- II. A PRACTICAL ESSAY ON THE INFLUENCES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.
- III. SERIOUS HINTS TO LOUD AND ALARMING PREACHERS OF THE GOSPEL, AND THE REGULAR AND ORDERLY PROFESSORS OF RELIGION.
- IV. THE MORNING AND EVENING MEDITATIONS OF A WEEK:

WITH SOME MINOR PIECES,

AND

EXTRACTS FROM FLAVEL.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR.

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1825.





BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH
OF
WILLIAM HASLETT, ESQUIRE*

THE late William Haslett was born at Dumnicey, in Ireland, on the 6th of May, 1766, and departed this life on the 11th of July, 1821, at Woodville, Mississippi. Early in life he emigrated to this country, which he adopted as his own, and became completely naturalized, not as it regards civil privileges only, but also, as to his feelings and attachments.

Mr. Haslett was endowed with a vigorous intellect; his judgment was sound and discriminating, his memory retentive, and his fancy lively. He had not indeed the advantages of a liberal education, but his mind was cultivated and strengthened by reading, by reflection, and by an acquaintance with the world. In the transaction of business he was prompt, methodical and decisive. He had a strong predilection for the *shipping business*; and as long as our trade was unembarrassed, his success was rapid and uninterrupted.

As an officer of the church, Mr. Haslett displayed no common talents. He was independent and

* Compiled from Mr. Haslett's papers, and an "Obituary Notice" of him, published in the Presbyterian Magazine, Vol. 1. for Nov. 1821.

firm in forming his own opinions, but respectful and conciliatory towards those with whom he acted. In all deliberative bodies to which he at any time belonged, the weight of his influence was felt, and the benefit of his counsels perceived. Few laymen in our country were better acquainted with ecclesiastical law; and none, perhaps, has exhibited more skill and address in the management of a perplexed and difficult cause.

But Mr. Haslett was still more distinguished by the qualities of his heart than his head. He was in an eminent degree susceptible of the emotions of sincere and constant friendship; and it was his felicity, during his life, to number in the list of his friends, many excellent and distinguished persons, both of the clergy and laity. No one seemed to set a higher value on genuine friendship, or to relish its pleasures more sensibly. To envy, vanity, and suspicion he seemed to be a stranger, and in his intercourse with friends, there was uniformly manifested such hearty good-will, so much sincerity, and so much innocent cheerfulness, that they were always fond of his society.

Mr. Haslett was peculiarly a *domestic man*. In the bosom of his family he was truly at *home*.—Blessed with a numerous, healthy, and promising family of children, who, like olive plants, encircled his board, he seemed when the business of the day was over, to find in this little circle, with the company of a few choice friends, exquisite pleasure. His attachment to his family was evidently strong: as a husband he was affectionate, as a father kind and indulgent.

The brightest trait in Mr. Haslett's character, however, was his deep and unaffected piety. He had received in his father's house a religious education, and before he became the subject of efficacious grace was moral and amiable in his deportment; but

when it pleased a gracious God to open his eyes, his conviction of his sinful and miserable condition was deep and severe. For some months he went mourning under a sense of his guilt, with his head bowed down like a bulrush; but when Christ was revealed, his deliverance was sudden and great. Of his conversion to God, he has written as follows:

“Cranberry, May 3d, 1793.

“Joseph Nourse, Esquire,

“Dear Sir,

“You expressed a desire of having some account of the Lord’s dealings with me, when I was disposed to write on this subject, but a diffidence of my ability to do it in a becoming manner, especially, as self is so much concerned, has hitherto prevented me. However, as I was lately reflecting upon the time and circumstances of our first acquaintance, and was led to admire the goodness of God to me in this instance, the obligations your friendship had laid me under were also brought afresh to my recollection, and I felt myself chargeable with ingratitude for withholding any thing which might afford you the least satisfaction. These reflections, together with the words of the Psalmist (Psalms 66, 16) and the apostle Peter’s admonition, (1 Peter 3, 15) have at length overcome all difficulties with me. May the blessed Jesus, who, I trust, has redeemed your soul and mine from eternal misery, guide my heart and pen so that his name may be glorified, and your soul comforted by what I have to declare of his goodness.

“My disposition from my youth, as far as I can now trace it was rather averse than inclined to the grosser follies of the times; and as I enjoyed the advantages of a religious education and was kept under strict family government, I always found the commission of known sins attended with trouble of conscience to a greater or less degree. I looked up-

on sin as an evil which I ought to avoid, but had no view of its evil nature, nor had I any idea of the corruption of my heart, and the necessity of an entire change. I had no knowledge of the gospel way of salvation, but did all I did upon legal principles, and often consoled myself with thinking if it were not well with me, what would become of multitudes I was acquainted with. I was early taught to pray, and I prayed frequently in private; for I thought God was under obligations to answer my prayers, according to Matt. vii. 7, and, I remember to have prayed often, in the immediate prospect of gratifying some evil propensity. As my father was an Arminian, (though called a Presbyterian) I was brought up in that belief; and was fully of opinion, that, if I did what I could, God would pardon the rest; for, I thought it would be injustice in God to require of me what I could not do. Thus I continued until the nineteenth year of my age, when I conceived a desire of coming to this country. I made it known to my parents, who were rather opposed to it, and advised me to think of getting into business at home. At the same time, my father made application to a gentleman engaged in the linen business, who wanted a young man to assist him. He agreed to take me, and the terms were agreed upon, only I was to have a week to consider the matter. Here I have frequently thought, the hand of Providence was visible in my favour; for almost every thing concurred to make me prefer my father's proposal. Only one objection remained with me, and that was, that the place where the gentleman lived was full of wickedness, and I thought I would be exposed to such temptations as I could not resist, and thereby bring a reproach upon myself and friends. I therefore determined (with my parents' consent) to prepare for America. Accordingly, in a somewhat feeling

manner, I laid before them my objections to what they had proposed, upon which they approved of my choice, and consented to my proposal.

“From my arrival in America to my settlement in this place, my conduct was much the same as formerly, with this difference, that as I had more liberty than when under my father’s care, I could indulge myself in many things with more freedom than before. After being here some time, I began to consider it my duty to join in communion with the church; accordingly I made application for admission at the approaching sacrament, though with but little hope of success, for I was grossly ignorant, as well of the nature of the ordinance, as of the qualifications of a worthy partaker. However, as the minister was an easy man, and my outward conduct had been pretty good, I was readily admitted.— Here I would just observe, that I think many poor souls are fatally deceived by an untimely admission to this ordinance, for, as they are taken into the number, and partake of the privileges of God’s children, they hence conclude they must be in covenant with God; and thus they get a peace of their own making, and rest secure upon a false hope, which nothing but the mighty power of God can bring them off. They say “peace, peace, when there is no peace.” Such, I believe to have been my condition, “but God, who is rich in mercy, &c.”

“But to return:—As I had now made a public profession of religion, (for none are called professors of religion here, but those who come to the sacrament,) I concluded I had laid myself under additional obligations to live a holy life, and therefore resolved to abstain from every thing that might injure my character as a professor, and to try to act as other christians did; for although I had often found my resolutions like rotten flax, yet I always

thought the reason was because I had not done every thing I ought to make them good, and therefore would do better under the like circumstances again. Thus I continued for five years fighting against sin with carnal weapons, but to no purpose: I was, however, kept from any gross outbreaks in the eyes of the world, and as I was frequent in religious duties I was esteemed by many as a growing christian, though I firmly believe I was no more than a poor self-deceived hypocrite. One thing I remember gave me frequent uneasiness, viz. that I never had experienced those preparative works of the spirit which usually introduce faith into the souls of God's children, such as illumination, conviction, self despair, &c. and I have often been ready to look upon some of God's children as mere egotists for declaring what God had done for their souls, for thus saying they reproached me, and self you know cannot bear to be touched so long as it keeps the throne of the affections. I have often thought, when reading of the great sin of unbelief, I had reason to be thankful that I had always been a believer, but a time came when I was taught to think otherwise. In my religious exercises I frequently experienced much flowing of the affections, and would often shed tears in abundance, and I have often said to myself upon such occasions, O! what a good experience is this, sure I shall now be able to give a good account of the Lord's dealings with me to others. Here you see self was still the object in view. I would here just suggest to you what I believe to have been a great mean of strengthening me in my false confidence:—You know Christians when they meet are apt to talk upon a variety of religious subjects, and thereby edify and strengthen each other, and as I found myself grossly deficient when conversing on christian experience, I set too with all my might to ac-

quire a greater share of knowledge, but it was only head knowledge I set out in pursuit of.—I read the experiences of christians, and tried to remember what I could of them, and I so far succeeded, that in a short time I could talk passing well on experimental religion, and had got to be pretty orthodox in my notions. Thus have I often (though not with a design to act the hypocrite, but through the deceitfulness of my own heart and the subtlety of Satan) offered things as my own experience, which I had only stolen from the experience of others, and was as ignorant of, as a man born blind is of colours. How much easier is it, my dear friend, to talk like a christian than to be one, and I believe there is not a grace God bestows upon his children, but Satan has its counterfeit to pass upon poor deceived perishing souls, therefore, “let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.”

“How common, yet how awful a mistake is it to think that a set of orthodox notions is not attainable without the power of divine grace, and that a bare speculative knowledge of scripture truths, together with an external performance of religious duties is all that is necessary to constitute us christians: but as Mr. Boston observes, it is much easier to come to Christ in duties, than to come out of duties to Christ:—but to proceed: I continued five years “having a form of godliness, but ignorant of the power of it—having a name to live whilst dead,” and should have gone down to the pit with a lie in my right hand, had not the Lord of his mere grace and mercy, interposed—join with me, my dear Sir, to praise Him who “hath chosen the base things of the world, and things which are despised, and things which are not to bring to nought things which are—who hath purposed to stain the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the honourable of the earth.”—As my comforts depended solely on my

frames and feelings, I was often led to question my state: for when my corruptions would at any time break out, (which they would frequently do,) I could have no peace until I had pacified conscience with resolutions of amendment; and one reason why my fears so easily subsided was, I thought it was a mark of grace to doubt; but now the time was come when it pleased the Lord to sweep away my false refuges, and shew me my true state and condition.

“On the Lord’s day after having attended the public worship, I felt my mind uncommonly gloomy from a recollection of my past sins, insomuch that I could not conceal it from the family I lived with. I told some of them that I never had been led to question the truth of my religion so much as I then was. My fears increased, and I felt exceedingly uncomfortable all that evening. On the morrow I took up Edwards, (having often heard it recommended) and the first place I opened seemed to be exactly suited to my case. I read awhile with eagerness, until I found my character so exactly described, and the very things I had been building upon utterly rejected as marks of grace.—I could hold out no longer. I saw myself “weighed in the balance and found wanting.” “When the commandment came, sin revived and I died.” The first thing that struck me was, whether I had not committed the unpardonable sin, and I was much inclined to think I had; for those passages Heb. vi. 4, 5, 6, x. 26, and xii. 16, 17, came all into my mind, and seemed to confirm me in that belief. I now looked upon myself as such a great hypocrite that all I said and did was abominable in the sight of God. I was obliged immediately to leave off all the outward duties of religion, which I had been pretty frequent in. I thought I had nothing to look for but the wrath of an angry God. I could not ap-

proach to God through Christ nor dare I to do it in any other way. Thus I continued for some days without attempting to pray any other way than by sighs and groans; sometimes before I was aware, I would break out in such expressions as, "What shall I do!"—"O wretched man," &c.—At length I procured Mr. Russel's sermon on the nature of the sin against the Holy Ghost, which gave me considerable relief; for, I saw that although I had often sinned wilfully, yet I never had, to my knowledge, sinned maliciously; I then attempted to pray in secret, but have often kneeled down without being able to utter a word. My mind was darkness itself; and the recollection of my former sins, and hypocrisy, would, as it were, shut me out from God. I lost all relish for company, and even for my necessary food, and spent my leisure hours for the most part, alone, bewailing my wretched condition. "I looked for comforters but I found none." The woods were my chief places of resort, where I could bemoan my miserable condition unseen by human eye. I have often remained in the fields till late in the evening, waiting, if haply the Lord would meet with me; but the words of Job were then applicable to me, "I go forward but he is not there, and backward but I cannot perceive him. He hideth himself on the right hand that I cannot see him." I have often gone into secret places with a ray of hope that this might be the time that God would appear for me, and perhaps have found my heart harder than ever, so that I have often mourned my strange insensibility, and wished in vain to shed a tear.

You will, no doubt, my dear sir, readily imagine that I was anxiously concerned to get comfort; yet, I assure you, I was, if possible, more concerned lest I should lose my convictions, and take comfort in something short of Christ: and I have often been grieved to the heart when people who knew not the

nature of my disorder, would prescribe carnal physic for my sin-sick soul. Indeed many times professed christians have given me pain by telling me I laid the matter too much to heart; for a great part of my grief was, because I was so little concerned; and I have often wondered how I could eat and sleep as I did, when I was conscious the wrath of God was hanging over me. I have often thought when people were urging me to believe in Christ, and I have told them my inability to do it, that they really thought I was not in earnest. And here I cannot help mentioning to you the absurdity of asserting (as a certain class of people do) that faith is the gift of God, just as the bounties of his common providence are, and that we can as easily believe in Christ as we can satisfy our hunger when food is offered to our acceptance. I know I found it otherwise, and I believe but few were ever more desirous of obtaining this precious grace than I. I could have cheerfully parted with every temporal good to obtain the smallest particle of it. Indeed I have often wished to be a beggar, and destitute of every earthly comfort, foolishly imagining I would then be a greater object of God's mercy. All this time I could receive nothing from the pulpit but what was addressed to sinners; whenever any thing was spoken to believers I could not touch it. I went once to Princeton (nine miles distant) to hear the Revd. John Smith; he preached from 2 Cor. v. 7, "We walk by faith, not by sight." Immediately upon hearing the text I concluded the sermon would not be for me, nor could I receive any of it but a few words of the application. Even although I had always been fond of singing, and frequent in the practice of it, I could now sing no more. My "laughter was turned into mourning and my joy to heaviness;" in this condition was I, when it pleased the Lord to give me an acquaint-

ance with you—to make you a witness of the effects of sin, and a mean of encouraging me when almost on the brink of despondency. And be assured, my dear sir, your sympathy with, and tender concern for me in my comfortless state, are written on my mind in indelible characters. I continued for some months afterwards under much the same exercises, spending my substance on physicians of no value, “and was nothing better, but rather grew worse,” for Satan was incessantly stirring up my corruptions, and I found myself in perpetual danger of being hurried into some notorious sin, and then I thought the door of mercy would be forever shut; and indeed in this he too far succeeded, for I think my greatest sins were those I committed during that time. Once I was reading Mr. Bunyan’s *Grace* abounding to the chief of sinners, with considerable attention, and I felt as in an instant, a secret wish pass through my mind, that I had been as great a sinner as he; this I have since thought to have been a dart thrown by Satan immediately from hell, though it was instantly charged against me as my own act, and I smarted severely for it afterwards. I often thought that the sharp temptations I felt were in consequence of that wish. I remember once being so sorely beset with sinful thoughts and desires, that I earnestly besought the Lord either to deliver me from the power of sin or to cut me off, and often at such times I have been twitted with “have you got your wish now?” Thus was Satan permitted to buffet me.—Sometimes in reading the word of God, I have got encouragement to think it might yet be well with me, but unbelief would immediately reply, “your hopes are vain, for none of God’s children were ever in your case.” One morning finding myself much indisposed for spiritual exercises, I had recourse to the Bible, and resolved to read the epistle to the Romans through,

though with little hopes of success—I read on without receiving any benefit, to the last chapter at the 20th verse, “And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly;” these words seemed to be accompanied with some degree of power on my heart, and produced in me a longing desire for the accomplishment of them, and a little revived my drooping spirits, but was soon gone. I at length began to think, the time of deliverance I had been so long expecting, would never come, and when I told some people the change I saw necessary to my present peace and everlasting happiness, they would give me to understand they thought I was looking for what I should never meet with.

I tried every way in which I had heard others were converted, vainly thinking the Lord would meet with me in the same manner, but to no purpose. And indeed my wicked heart has often been ready to charge God with dealing hardly with me, though at other times I saw myself justly doomed to everlasting destruction.—But now the Lord’s own time was come. He knows what is necessary to bring down the pride of our hearts and make us submit to the righteousness of Christ. As I had been a communicant for some years, I found new difficulties arise in my mind on the approach of the sacrament, for I was afraid to keep back from the ordinance, lest I should be deficient in my duty and give occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully, and on the other hand I was conscious of not being suitably qualified to be a worthy partaker, and therefore afraid I should only seal my own condemnation. I concluded however it would be safest to keep back, and accordingly resolved that unless the Lord was pleased to prepare me by his grace, I would not attempt to join in communion at that season. The Friday preceding the sacrament was appointed to be kept as a day of fasting and prayer,

preparatory to the approaching solemnity.—The day came, but to me it was a stormy day—a day of darkness as darkness itself. I attempted to pray, but found my heart entirely shut up, so that I could find no relish for, nor comfort in any duty. The sources from whence I had formerly derived encouragement, seemed to be entirely shut up, and I seemed to be left without help and without hope. Thus I continued that day and night:—on Saturday morning I took up Mr. Flavel's works, and in reading one of his sermons I found my mind uncommonly engaged, so that I was constrained to lay down the book and retire to my room,—I felt my heart sensibly touched, insomuch that I shed tears in abundance. I thought it was something extraordinary, but suspected it was from Satan, (as I had formerly been deceived by the flowing of the affections,) for I thought he knew I wanted rest for my poor weary soul, and was now going to pass his counterfeits upon me by causing me to rest on something short of Christ; I therefore earnestly besought the Lord that he would not suffer me to be deluded by Satan—that I was willing to wait his own time in my unhappy condition, rather than take comfort in any thing short of an union with Jesus. During this time my heart panted after Christ “as the hart panteth for the water-brooks.” At length I felt my soul escaped as a bird out of the hand of the fowler—I had “a new song put in my mouth, even praise to our God;”—then was “the prey taken from the mighty, and the lawful captive delivered,”—I saw Jesus every way suited to my wants, and found in him that rest to my weary soul which I had so long sought in vain elsewhere. His name was then to me as ointment poured forth, and I longed to see some of God's dear children that we might join to praise him. The relief I felt was as sensible as though I had been confined in a dungeon, under a ponderous

load for five months, (for the same day five months that the fountain of the great deep was broken up, the Lord was pleased to open my eyes and shew me the bow in the cloud as a token for good,) and immediately ushered into light and liberty, for that was the comparison I had then in my mind.—I had nothing uncommon presented to my imagination, neither had I any assurance that my sins were forgiven me, but I felt a sweet calmness of mind, and sensible thirsting of soul after Christ, to which I had ever before been a stranger.

Since that time I have enjoyed much peace of mind, and a considerable deliverance from my sins and temptations; and although I have but seldom doubted of the Lord's work being begun in my soul, I know not that this has ever had the remotest tendency to make me remiss in the duties of his appointment. I believe whoever has tasted that the Lord is gracious, would not remit his diligence was he ever so sure of getting to heaven at last—no, my dear sir, communion with God is heaven to the believing soul, and nothing short of the light of his countenance will satisfy his desires—"not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect," no, my dear friend, I am as poor, as helpless, as needy as ever; but I trust, in the Lord Jehovah I have righteousness and strength.—He is all my salvation and all my desire. But, O my ingratitude to this very hour! How often do I detect my wicked heart doing that abominable thing which the Lord hates; and, although I believe much has been forgiven me, yet alas! how little do I love! But the Lord who is gracious and merciful, knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are dust, and since he spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all, let us trust his gracious promise that he will with him also freely give us all things. To his name be glory for ever.

Thus, my dear sir, I have given you my little history with that freedom and confidence which your friendship deserves. Have just to request as a continuance of your favours, that you would remember your poor unworthy friend when it is well with you, and believe me to be sincerely

And affectionately, Yours,

WM. HASLETT."

After having found peace and joy in believing, it is not known that he was ever afterwards much perplexed with distressing doubts respecting his justification. His religious exercises, however, were subject in other respects, to as great vicissitudes as most others. He was accustomed to exercise uncommon vigilance over his own heart, and had a deep insight into the corrupt fountain from which all evil proceeds. His knowledge of experimental religion was uncommon: the distinguishing evidences of genuine piety he had diligently studied. Much of his reading was of authors whose writings were of the most spiritual and searching kind. The pious Flavel was, perhaps, his favourite; and deservedly so, for he owed to him more than any other person, living or dead. This subject also, was with him a frequent theme of conversation with his pious friends. It seems to have been an object with him, all his life, to search out exercised souls, who had a rich experience of the various dealings of God, both in his providence and in his grace.

The following extract from one of his letters will shew that even in the early part of his christian experience he knew how to value and avail himself of the fellowship of saints.

"Cranberry, 14th Sept. 1792.

"Joseph Nourse, Esqr.

Dear Sir, I hope you are enjoying the comforts of religion in your own soul,

whilst I am labouring under the power of a hard heart, struggling against sin and unbelief; and all the powers of the prince of darkness! I still remain in the same dark and uncomfortable state of mind, as when I had the pleasure of seeing you.—Would have written you much sooner, but have been for the most part much discouraged, sometimes almost reduced to a state of despondency.

Your obt. humble servt.

WM. HASLETT."

This letter Mr. Nourse sent to the late pious Joseph Magoffin Esquire, who returned it with the following note:—

"Dear Sir, I observe you are to answer the above. I hope your pen will be that of a ready writer. Thus saith the Lord to him *that walketh in darkness and hath no light; let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.* But he may say to you, in the bitterness of his soul, I know not the way—I cannot so much as see men like trees walking; *He maketh me dwell in darkness as those who have been long dead.* But, thus saith the Lord, *At even-time it shall be light.* And when the day begins to dawn, it is no difficult matter to see the dead bones come together, and flesh and sinews come over them; and light is worth waiting for: we must be taught that it is so. Mary came to the sepulchre while it was yet dark; and it was well worth her pains to come to that sepulchre which had contained the Sun of Righteousness. Clouds are his covering, and he dwelleth in thick darkness. But it is the darkness of too much light—too much for our enfeebled eyes. The blessed Jesus must touch the eyes a second time, and then we will see, every man clearly. Elijah's servant was full of terror and fear without any cause; for, as soon as his eyes were opened, he saw the whole mountain full of chariots and horses of fire.

“I hope you will sympathize with, and answer your friend largely. We know not how, nor when a word may be fitly spoken, and O, how good is it! A certain man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel. A sling and a stone is all the armour that is needful; if the Lord be there, all the Goliath-like plagues and idols of the heart will fall.

“Thanks for Edwards, I always thought him a great man, but now I think him like Saul among the prophets, higher by the head and shoulders. He has been a great genius, and a close thinker. I am reading him with eagerness.

“I think, if it shall please God to give the blessing, we have here more than five small loaves and a few small fishes, but without that, not half so much. But let me not weary you: I would just say to you and this good man (who, may we hope will be our mutual and eternal friend) and to myself, let us *go on* our way: and only add, *Come Lord Jesus, come quickly, Amen.*

JOS. MAGOFFIN.”

“*Cranberry, 18th Decr. 1792.*

“Joseph Nourse, Esqr.

“Dear Sir, Your much esteemed favour of the 27th Novr. came to hand, together with a guide to prayer, (which I think is well calculated to promote the author’s intention, and is very suitable to my present wants,) but, my dear friend, your letter itself produced in me a still more powerful guide; for, before I had done reading, I was obliged to retire and pour out my heart unto the God of all my mercies. Thank you sincerely for your friend’s letter, it proved a mean of refreshing my soul; I think he is an Israelite indeed, and if I mistake not, has himself been a stranger in the land of Egypt, seeing he knoweth the heart of a stranger. My dear sir it rejoices my heart to hear from different quarters that there are some who have

felt the power of Christ's resurrection in their souls, and who count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of him. Let this encourage us, my christian friend, to follow on to know the Lord—in due time we shall reap if we faint not—blessed be God that ever I have been favoured with the acquaintance of any such—they are in my esteem the excellent of the earth, they are the only persons whom I desire to know, and with whom I hope to spend a long and happy eternity.

“My dear friend, I often remember with gratitude the kind providence that gave me an opportunity of being acquainted with you, and if it has pleased God to make his dealings with me in any degree profitable to your soul, it is an additional call for thankfulness on my part, and if our acquaintance has been blessed to our mutual advantage, let us mutually ascribe the praise of all to the great source of all our happiness and comfort.

“Since I had the pleasure of seeing you I have enjoyed for the most part much peace of mind, and at sometimes it has pleased the Lord to give me a taste of unutterable joy—sometimes I think I can adopt the words of the psalmist, “He brought me up out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and “set my feet upon a rock—and he hath put a new “song in my mouth, even praise unto our God.” But it is not so at all times, and I have had one remarkable season of darkness not long ago, though it continued but two days—then I could say “My “heart is smitten and withered like grass, so that I “forget to eat my bread—I watch and am as a spar-“row alone upon the house top.” Indeed I never before so well understood Mr. Bunyan's Doubting Castle and Giant Despair, I think it truly descriptive of the state I was then in. But blessed be God, I have found that although weeping may endure for a night, joy cometh in the morning—that the Lord

will not always chide, neither will he keep his anger forever—blessed forever be the Lord who forgiveth all our iniquities; who healeth all our diseases.

“My dear friend I thank you sincerely for my little book. Hope I shall improve by its valuable directions, and not forget to remember my kind friend to whom I stand indebted for so useful and to me so necessary a help. Would be glad to know who this valuable friend of yours is, and if he would condescend to take notice of the least and most unworthy of those who bear the name, and profess to be the followers of Jesus. Would be happy in the prospect of one day being personally acquainted with him.

“I am sorry to hear of Mr. Smith’s indisposition, feel my soul engaged in pleading for his recovery, though I believe for him to die would be gain. Yet I would hope and pray (with due submission to the divine will) that his life may be prolonged. Surely he hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also. His words have been in season to my weary soul. My heart is knit with his for his faithfulness in his master’s service, and for the sweet refreshment it pleased the Lord to give me through his instrumentality.

“It will give me pleasure to hear from you again. I know sir you are a good deal engaged in worldly business, but I hope and believe the business you most delight in is religion. Therefore if ye have judged me to be faithful, favour me with an account of the Lord’s dealings with you—remember the words of your friend “We know not when a word “may be fitly spoken—and a bow at a venture hath “sometimes hit the mark.” I will consider it my high privilege to write you in my turn.

Ever, ever Yours,

WM. HASLETT.”

The following remarks respecting revivals of religion, are, perhaps, too valuable to be omitted :

“ *Philadelphia, March 24th, 1802.*

“ Joseph Nourse, Esquire,

Dear Sir, It has been my opinion from the first, that even those who cannot get above their prejudices, and see the finger of God in this great work, ought, at least, to take the advice of Gamaliel and *let it alone*, lest haply they be found to fight even against God.” We are strange selfish beings, and are ever ready to limit the Holy One of Israel to such ways and methods of working as *our* experience can approve. But as well might we deny our existence, as that “His ways are unsearchable and past finding out.” If the apostle could rejoice that Christ was preached, even though from motives of envy and strife, shall not every pious soul rejoice to see his kingdom spread, by whatever means the Holy Spirit is pleased to make use of for this end? I have no doubt my dear friend, but in this, as well as all former revivals, Satan is busy sowing his tares; and even amongst those who are savingly wrought upon, may we not look for some things which will be justly considered as imprudence and extravagance, but shall we, on this account, deny that it is the Lord’s doings, and marvellous in our eyes? “Tell it not in Gath,” for most assuredly the hearts of the uncircumcised will triumph.”

In this same letter Mr. Haslett thus expresses his regard for his friend, and his confidence in God :

“My dear friend will perceive with how much freedom I suffer my pen to run when writing to you. Yes, my heart is enlarged, and I feel, even at this distance of time, the powerful influence of our first interview. Your friendship and tenderness on that occasion, *more firm in my remembrance stands, than if engraved in brass.* Many changes have

taken place in my poor, wandering, unstable soul since then, and it well becomes me to adopt the language "Oh that my head were waters, &c." But it is our consolation that "our great High Priest is passed into the heavens." "His blood speaketh better things than the blood of Abel." Strange, that were we commanded to do some *great* thing, we would at once attempt to do it, but discover such a backwardness to "*wash and be clean.*"

In those associations of pious men sometimes held in this city [Philadelphia] for conference on *vital religion*, Mr. Haslett was always considered an instructive and useful member. He was much in secret meditation, reading and prayer: his closet he considered the place where the surest test of the state of his soul might be found. If all was right here, it was so every where else; and here, the first symptoms of declension and backsliding manifested themselves. But he delighted greatly in public ordinances. The sabbath was to him *a delight and honourable*; and he was evidently glad when they said unto him, *Come, let us go up to the house of the Lord*. Many a time has the church proved to him a Bethel; and while the messenger of God displayed the riches of grace, his heart has been filled to overflowing, and he has been ready to exclaim, *It is good to be here. One day in thy courts is better than a thousand.*

In prosperity it is no difficult thing to say, *The Lord gave*; but, in adversity to thankfully *bless the Lord, who taketh away*, is no easy matter; yet, through Christ who strengthened him, Mr. Haslett, like Job blessing God in adversity as well as in prosperity, exemplified by his faith and its fruits, that religion is a sufficient support of the soul in all circumstances. By its hallowing influence, "tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not

ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

Faith which has not been tried, cannot be known to be faith. Affliction is the test of virtue. That ore which appears very brilliant, often vanishes when cast into the furnace. The character which has stood fair in the day of prosperity, is often withered in the day of adversity. This remark is verified in a greater degree, in no class of persons than merchants who become bankrupt. The change in their circumstances is often so sudden, their families are accustomed to live in ease, and often in luxury, and are totally unprepared to endure hardship, their opportunities of defrauding their creditors are so great, that many who have maintained lofty pretensions to honour and integrity, fall disgracefully on this slippery ground. Indeed the evidence which would convict a man of fraud, is commonly wanting in these cases; but the ease and abundance in which the family of the bankrupt lives in retirement, but too plainly demonstrate that there has been some unfair management. This trial was endured by Mr. Haslett without a suspicion affecting his integrity. He honestly gave up every thing; and the circumstances to which his family was immediately reduced, showed that he had passed through this severe ordeal *unhurt*.

Mr. Haslett neither murmured at Providence nor sunk into despondency. He bowed his neck to the yoke submissively, and seemed to say by all his conduct, *It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good*. His friends could observe no perceivable difference in his tranquillity, or his cheerfulness, and yet his nature was remote from insensibility.

The utility of appending the following letters &c. will be obvious to every intelligent reader. Before

they can be fully understood, however, it is necessary for the reader to know, that, after much deliberation, Mr. Haslett embarked with his two youngest sons, Samuel and Thomas, for New Orleans, intending to recommence business in that city. But, without his fault, he was utterly disappointed.—Therefore, leaving his sons in that city,—Samuel having, through the influence of DANIEL W. COXE, esquire, obtained a situation in the Custom House, and Thomas being received into the family of JOHN and ABRAHAM INSKIP, esquires, he went up the country to Woodville, and opened a store. The short time Mr. Haslett remained there, success attended his efforts.

*Ship W. P. Johnson, Capt. Dawes,
At Sea, February 15th, 1819.*

My Dear Caroline, Although we are now at a great distance from you, and every day increasing that distance, yet we can in a moment place ourselves at the corner of Walnut and Front streets, and take a particular interest in what is doing there, My thoughts often lead me thither, and my prayers often ascend to the God of sabaoth for your well-being and happiness. I hope my dear Caroline will remember her Creator in the days of her youth, and seek the Lord while he may be found. I hope to hear that all of you attend Dr. Neill's bible class, as you may thereby receive much spiritual knowledge. I hope you will be a dutiful girl to your mother, and affectionate and kind to your sisters; and live together without complaining or finding fault one with another—Live in peace and the God of love and peace shall be with you. If the Lord bring us safe to land, I hope to receive letters from you by every packet. With love to your mother, sisters, and grand-pa, I am,

Your affectionate Father,

WM. HASLETT.

*Ship W. P. Johnson,
At Sea, February 15th, 1819.*

My dear Elizabeth and Janetta, We are now floating on the great water, and the ship sometimes rocks about so, that we cannot stand or sit without holding by a rope or something else; but when the wind is fair she behaves better, and we can write and read and sit comfortably.

About ten days ago we were near a large rock in the sea, and the wind was ahead and nearly calm, and we let go our anchor and the captain and all the passengers went ashore in the boat and landed on the rock. The top of the rock was about as large as two squares in Philadelphia. When we landed we saw a great quantity of large birds about the size of a duck, and they were sitting (many of them) on their nests, and would not rise until we would come close to them. Every nest had two large eggs, and we thought we could take some of them on board, (for we might have filled several barrels) but we found they were mostly rotten. Some of the young ones were beautiful, as white as snow and long down upon them. We brought some on board but they were not eatable. The boys were much delighted with this little adventure, and so would Elizabeth and Janetta and Caroline and Mary-Ann and Harriett and even Ma, had they all been with us.

We sailed from this rock, which is called "*The Great Isaac*," when the wind came fair, and had gone but a short distance when a privateer came up with us and fired a shot to bring us to. She was full of men, and we were all busy in putting some of our clothes out of the way, as we expected they would plunder us of such things as they wanted, but when they came on board they behaved very civilly and disturbed nothing. They asked us for some potatoes and we gave them a barrel, two

pounds of butter, and a dozen of porter; in exchange for which they gave us a 15 gallon cask of red wine and a quantity of onions, and so we parted to our great joy. The wine is very good with water, and now the weather is warm we find it very pleasant.

And now my dear children I hope the Lord will bless you, and make you good and happy. Be obedient to your Ma, and kind to each other; you know birds in their little nests agree. As little Maria Louisa could not understand a letter, you must give her a kiss for Pa, and I hope you will learn fast, that you may soon be able to write me a letter.

Your affectionate Father,
WM. HASLETT.

P. S. I will expect to hear you are still learning your catechism, and hope you will say it every sabbath day.

Woodville, Octr. 9th, 1819.

Alexander Henry, Esqr.

Esteemed friend—My last communication was from “the house of mourning,” and this is a second edition with additions—“*severer* for severe.” It has pleased a kind and merciful God to take from us our beloved son Samuel;—he died on the 26th ult. after five days illness. How often, my dear friend, do we act the part of children: when the Lord lays his hand light upon us we make a loud complaint, as though our sufferings were intolerable, and then he, as a wise parent, makes us feel indeed, and quietly submit to his will. When our dear son Thomas was taken, I felt the stroke and thought it heavy, but this last dispensation I have found much harder to bear, and all the fortitude I could summon was like burnt flax.

This dear youth had wound himself deeply into my affections. His correspondence with me here had surprized and comforted me, and I had fondly

hoped he would have been spared to be the support and solace of my declining years—he had moreover an acquaintance and aptness in business beyond his years. But why do I thus indulge the pleasing, painful recollection—he is mine no more. O that I could truly and practically say, “the will of the Lord be done.” I have indeed tried to submit, and I would fondly hope, have “not charged God foolishly.” But “soon or late the heart must bleed that idols entertain.” I think it probable my dear family will have heard of this second stroke before this reaches you, if not, you will please introduce the subject with some preface before you deliver the gloomy tidings. I enclose some verses which I wrote to try to alleviate my “overmuch sorrow,” if you think proper you may take copy and deliver the original to my weeping family, and should my dear friend and brother Jaudon, &c. wish a mournful remembrancer of me, you can furnish it. There is nothing meritorious in the composition, &c. but they were written with a sorrowful and disconsolate heart, and with many tears. I had been careful, and troubled about losses, disappointments, &c. but this has swallowed up all the rest for the time being. I do not expect to get to Orleans before the middle of November, and there my grief must be renewed afresh, if indeed I am spared until that time, for this whole country is sickly, and many dying all around with the same fever that prevails in Orleans. A few days since a member of the family where I live, died with it in four days sickness. Please to write to me to Orleans.—Love to the brethren and all friends.—Pray for me. Yours truly,

W. HASLETT.

Woodville, (Mississippi) Octr. 9th, 1819.

My Dear wife and daughters,

What shall I say to console you, when I am myself almost overwhelmed in sorrow.—“In-

satiate archer! could not one suffice? thy shaft flew thrice, and thrice my peace was slain, and twice ere once yon moon had fill'd her horn." My beloved, too much beloved Samuel is no more. He has followed his brother down to the tomb, and left me to wander on these unfriendly shores alone. He was taken on the night of the 21st Septr. and had every attention paid him which the best physicians and nurses could bestow, but the Lord was pleased to call him away on the morning of the 26th Septr. I heard of his sickness in a few days, but was not informed of the issue until a few days ago, and during this state of suspense, you may imagine, but you cannot realize my solicitude—I prayed and wept, and wept and prayed. This dear boy's letters would surprize you—he seldom omitted to request earnestly my prayers for himself and his dear brother Thomas, as he called him; and in his last letter he says, "My dear father, I fear the loss of my dear brother Thomas will affect you greatly, but you are well versed in misfortune, and I hope will be enabled to bear up under it." I had written to them to go over to the bay of St. Louis, but they found it difficult to get away, and very expensive, and they put it off until too late. Indeed the country even here, is little better than Orleans, and the the same yellow or bilious fever prevails, but is not quite so malignant. There are few houses where part of the family is not sick. One in the family where I board died in four days sickness last week with yellow fever.

The Lord has preserved me in tolerable health hitherto; for your sakes I trust he will preserve me a little longer. As soon as it is safe, I purpose if the Lord will, to return to Orleans, where I anticipate a sorrowful season—no affectionate child to welcome my arrival there, *O, my sons, my sons!*

—but I forbear : “it is the Lord,” I will bless his holy name and hold my peace.

I have enclosed to my friend Henry some verses, which I here present you as a memorial of a living husband and parent, and of departed worth—it has no merit in it, but was composed under heart-felt sorrow, and it would have been easy, during the time I wrote it, to have covered the paper with tears. May the Lord comfort and support you, and sanctify to us all his gracious dealings. Write to me at Orleans; let my beloved Harriett, Mary and Caroline write to me and put their letters into the care of the captain of the packet, with a request to deliver to me himself, to save a heavy postage which is charged here. Let me know what prospect you have of living; I expect it will take more than I can raise to pay the expense of doctors, &c. which are very high, but I will try to earn something as speedily as possible, in some way—the Lord, I hope, will direct me. My love to friends, and may the God of peace be with you. I am

Your afflicted
WM. HASLETT.

New Orleans, Novr. 20th, 1819.

My beloved Daughters, I have now no sons to address—your dear brothers are all gone down to the silent tomb. You may well imagine what my feelings have been, on and since my arrival here—when the steam boat arrived opposite the custom house where my dear Samuel used to write, and the friends of those who had been absent were pressing on board to welcome their arrival—Oh my heart what didst thou feel! no affectionate Samuel and Thomas to greet my arrival—no, they were no longer to be found among the living!—I soon repaired to the melancholy receptacle of the dead, and found my dear Samuel’s grave. I expect to find Thomas’s yet. I have some of Samuel’s hair and his profile,

shall I send them to you? I have received all your letters to Samuel up to the 18th, Octr. (post mark) and note in your dear mother's last, the death of Grand-Pa and Dr. Monroe—my dear William had gone before—I would fondly hope they would all meet in heaven—there the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.

Your dear brothers here had greatly improved in every thing praise-worthy. Samuel was an uncommon youth—the collector told a gentleman of my acquaintance that he never had his accounts so neatly kept before. But it has pleased the Lord to take them from a world of sorrow and of sin, and we must not repine nor sorrow as those who have no hope. You have heard from Samuel the particulars of Thomas's death. Samuel was taken on the night of the 21st. September about 10 o'clock—had a physician sent for, who came immediately, and attended him constantly. On Saturday, 25th, my friend wrote me he was better, and that they had hopes of his recovery; but that night he grew worse, and about midnight he was seized with the black vomit. He had his senses until that time, he then became delirious, and about 9 o'clock on Sunday morning, 26th, his soul took its flight. O! my dear children, how solemn is the hour of death, and how sensibly have we been reminded of its awful certainty. I cannot get your dear brothers out of my mind for a single hour while awake, and I sleep little,—may the Lord support us all.

Samuel, as well as Thomas, had the best attendance possible. The lady he lived with treated him as her own child in his illness, and she wept at his remembrance when I first called upon her. It gives me great pleasure to hear you are a comfort to your mother; I hope you will, each and all of you, seek religion while young—your dear brothers used to write "My dear papa, remember us in your pray-

ers," and surely the woods can bear me witness that I cried to the Lord for them. Write to me my dear Harriet, Mary, and Caroline;—send your letters up to Mr. Henry and he will forward them by the packets. With my earnest wishes for your happiness and comfort, I am, my beloved children,

Your affectionate father,

WM. HASLETT.

Do my dear Elizabeth and Janetta seem to realize their brothers death? Tell them papa loves them dearly, and often thinks of their dear prattle. Can little Maria Louisa walk and talk?

New Orleans, 20th May, 1820.

My dear Wife and Daughters,

I am not a little disappointed at not hearing from you by one of the packets just arrived. It is now upwards of three months since the date of your last letters. I hope nothing special has occurred to prevent your writing, and what can be the reason?

Since my last, nothing of importance has transpired. The weather now is remarkably warm, and you may readily suppose the people are looking forward to the sickly season with some degree of anxious solicitude.—By the brig *Feliciana*, which sailed a few days since, I sent to Mr. Henry's care two barrels of sugar, which I hope you will receive safe. The season of business will soon be over here, and I purpose, if spared, to take some goods with me to the country, about the beginning of August, in hopes of doing something during the autumn.

Inclosed you will receive some verses written after my return to this place, and after receiving the news of our dear William's decease. I hope they will serve rather to soothe than to grieve your minds. Perhaps at no one period did I so sensibly feel the weight of my afflictions as at the time I arrived here, and having no intimate friend with

whom I could freely converse on the subject, I gave vent to my feelings on paper; and, to gratify some of those who had read the manuscript and wished to have copies, I gave them to the printer. I hope they will be acceptable, not on account of any real value or beauty, but as a memorial of the writer and our dear departed children.

If I am spared I hope to be in a way of doing something next winter. Business in this place is exceedingly precarious, and failures much more frequent here than in Philadelphia, although the population is not one half. I hope my beloved children will be affectionate, kind, and attentive to their mother, and endeavour to improve each others minds, especially endeavour to improve in the knowledge of God and divine things. I hope I shall soon hear from you and of your welfare. I beg you will write me by mail without thinking of postage, and with earnest wishes for your happiness, I am, Your affectionate husband and father.

WM. HASLETT.



The following lines were written by an afflicted parent on hearing of the death of two beloved sons, (Samuel and Thomas Haslett) in N. Orleans, Sept. 1819. and presented as a mournful remembrancer to a weeping mother and sisters.

*The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away,
blessed be the name of the Lord. Job i. 21.*

On the banks of Mississipi,
Pensive, drooping, and forlorn,
Lo! I wander, none to pity,
While with grief my bosom's torn.
Far from friends, and at a distance
From my kindred and my home,

Only Thou canst grant assistance,
Gracious God ! to thee I come.
Pity, O my Father shew me !
Pity dwells within thy breast ;
But thy grace and love bestow me,
Sooth, O sooth my griefs to rest !
Saviour, once when here sojourning,
Thou with weeping friends didst weep ;
Visit now the house of mourning—
In the grave our children sleep.
While we shed the tear of sorrow,
O'er your tombs, beloved youth,
May we from religion borrow
Consolation, built on truth.
From this world of tribulation
You've been early called away,
Taught, I trust, the great salvation—
Should we wish your longer stay ?
When by duty's call directed
To this pestilential shore,
Little had we then expected
Thus to part to meet no more.*
Tho' in youth, that giddy season,
You could share a parent's pain ;
To our hearts endear'd—good reason !
Death, alas ! our peace hath slain.
Let us then with due submission,
To thy will our Father bow,
With sincere and deep contrition,
Bless the hand afflicts us now.
Thou art still the good, the gracious,
All thy ways and dealings just ;
To our souls thy word is precious,
On thy promise, sure, we trust.
Though our friends and children leave us,
Here a few short days to mourn.

* In this world.

He that died and rose to save us,
To our joy, will soon return.
May we then with rapt'rous pleasure,
Be prepar'd to meet above,
All who sought the heav'nly treasure,
All who priz'd a Saviour's love.
There no pestilential fever,
Nor that worse distemper, sin,
Shall approach, but bliss, forever
Pure and unalloy'd, begin.
Let thy love, our Father, cheer us,
While this wilderness we roam;
Be thy gracious presence near us,
Till thou art pleas'd to call us home.



The first effusions of parental sorrow, occasioned by the death of three beloved and promising youths,* during the months of August and September, 1819, were written in the country, and appeared in the *New Orleans Chronicle*, in November last. The following were penned after the return of their afflicted parent to that city, the principal scene of his late sufferings, where almost every circumstance serves to remind him of his loss, and to renew the painful feelings of his deeply wounded heart.

I will sing of mercy and of judgment. Ps. ci. 1.

No,—tho' I would, I cannot cease to mourn,
A complicated grief afflicts my breast,
With ev'ry rising sun my sighs return,
And painful recollections break my rest.

* Mr. Haslett had three sons:

WILLIAM, born 22d August, 1800; departed this life at St. George's, Bermuda, on the 16th August, 1819, aged 18 years, 11 months, 24 days.

SAMUEL, born October 1, 1801; departed this life at New Orleans, 26th September, 1819, aged 17 years, 11 months, 21 days.

My busy thoughts new streams of grief supply,
And mem'ry still recounts my sorrows o'er;

To shun the retrospect in vain I try,
My aching bosom bleeds at every pore.

With holy Job, my heart within me says,
In sad review of dear delights now flown,
Would it were with me as in former days,
Ere "melancholy mark'd me for her own"—

When round me stood my fondest earthly props,
My *children*, guardians of declining years:

But now bereft—now blasted all my hopes,
Am left to mourn in solitude and tears.

Beloved youths! tho' for a time we part,
Short season ere, I hope, we'll meet again,
Your mem'ry's deeply grav'd upon my heart,
And there, must still *indelible* remain.

What tho' no monument your tombs supply,
No sculptur'd stone points out your lowly bed,
Though in obscurity your ashes lie,
Your worth outlives the marbles of the dead.

Denied alas! a parting, last adieu!
Unconscious of the impending, dreadful stroke,
Your souls were gone, ere the sad tale I knew,
The flash had struck, ere yet the thunder broke.

No father near to lift the fervent prayer,
Or succour yield in that most trying hour,
No mother's fond endearments could you share,
Nor in her bosom all your sorrows pour:

No weeping sisters press around your bed,
With deep *solicitude* to give relief;

No dear companions tears of friendship shed,
Nor join their sorrows to this *sum* of grief.

But all was melancholy—all was woe!
When from this world of sin your spirits fled,

THOMAS, born 28th December, 1803, departed this life at New Orleans, 11th September, 1819, aged 15 years, 8 months, 14 days.

When strangers kindly other cares forego
To soothe your pains and smooth your dying bed.

By strangers were your obsequies perform'd,
By strangers shed the sympathetic tear,

By strangers honour'd, and by strangers mourn'd.
By strangers follow'd, was your lonely bier.

But is there then, my soul, no healing balm?
No bow of promise glimmering through the cloud?

Yes, gracious Saviour, thou canst say "be calm,"
Amidst the raging of the tempest loud.

Yes, in the book of God the humble find
A sure resource when earthly comforts flee,
Nor will Thou e'er forsake the lowly mind,
That casts its cares and burdens, Lord, on thee.

Now, while I turn the sacred pages o'er
In quest of truth and consolation sure,

I see new beauties unobserv'd before,
I feel new pleasures permanent and pure :

There too I learn, *O that I felt it more !*
SUBMISSION, unreserv'd, to Heaven's decree ;

To bow in silence and the hand adore
That smites and heals, that wounds and comforts me.

Now while the loss of earthly joys I feel,
Wither'd my gourds and blasted every flower,

May grace divine both sanctify and heal,
And fit me for my last departing hour :

That I amidst my difficulties may,
While passing through this vale of Bacca dry,
The sacred pleasure have to weep and pray—
And meet a Father's smile, and pitying eye.

O privilege divine ! how great ! how sweet !
To cast our burdens on th' Almighty's care,

To sit, like Mary, at a Saviour's feet,
And there dissolve in penitence and pray'r.

To see his countenance, to hear his voice,
Whatever woes betide or comforts flee,

Drowns all our sorrows and awakes our joys,
And leads, O God, to happiness and Thee.

A Saviour's presence can a bliss impart,
E'en when affliction fill the tide of wo;—

A word from him can cheer the drooping heart,
And bid the threat'ning billows cease to flow.

A word from him can all our fears destroy,
When thro' death's gloomy vale we're call'd to go,
Can waft our spirits to that world of joy,
Where bliss supreme his grace and love bestow.



STANZAS, in memory of WILLIAM HASLETT, ESQ. of
Philadelphia, who died at Woodville, 1821.

Servant of Christ! the meed divine,
Which crowns the just when life has run :
The wealth of deathless love is thine.
The plaudit of thy God—"Well done."

Borne on affliction's stormy deep,
The path thy Saviour trod before,
'Twas thine in solitude to weep,
Yet lowly, meekly, to adore.

In foreign climes, when far away,
From those whose solace could befriend,
Faith trusted the Immortal Stay,
Who said, "I'm with you to the end ;"
And when thy offspring met their God.
The father wept upon their dust,
The Christian, humbled 'neath the rod.
Confess'd Jehovah's dealings just.

Servant of Christ! the night of gloom
That cheerless gather'd o'er thy brow,
Awoke the day-spring of the tomb,
Which brightly breaks upon thee now.

Oh ye! who by stern sorrow tried,
Yet linger in life's wilderness,
Come! lean on Him, the widow's guide,
The Father of the Fatherless!

AN ADDRESS
TO THE
CLERGY AND CHRISTIANS
OF ALL DENOMINATIONS;
WITH SOME
DISCRIMINATIVE
MARKS OF GRACE.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

The following pages were written under an impressive sense of the languishing state of religion. It is not intended by the Author to censure or to reflect upon those to whom it is addressed; but to offer a few hints, which the great Head of the Church may bless to his faithful ministers, whom we esteem very highly in love for their work's sake. We doubt not that many of them mourn in secret on account of the want of success in their ministrations, and long to see the pleasure of the Lord, prospering in their hands. To *such*, we believe our remarks will not appear altogether unseasonable. If the writer has been actuated by proper motives, (and we have the testimony of our own conscience in this respect) and has taken a correct view of this very important subject, may he not hope that the blessing of God will accompany and succeed this humble attempt, though it be but as a cup of cold water given in the name of a disciple?

If it should be intimated, that an Address to the Clergy would have come with more propriety from a Divine, than from an obscure Layman, the fact is readily admitted; yet we may be permitted to say, that ministers in general think they have already enough to do, and if we can in any wise aid them in their labours, by strengthening their hands or exciting their zeal, even though we should only be as hewers of wood and drawers of water to the congregation of the faithful, may we not hope for acceptance according to that which we have, and not be estimated according to that which we have not?

As to the imperfections which the skilful eye of the practised critic may detect, it is only needful to say—we are made up of imperfections—none is free from them—“None is good but one, that is God.” Our chief encouragement is derived from the views and (we may hope) the experience we have had of His power and grace, in some cases when all human help had utterly failed, and when we were constrained to trust in God alone, and were helped. We may well say with the Psalmist, “If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, &c.” In what we have written, we have no hope of benefit or usefulness, but through the grace of the Holy Spirit, who, we firmly believe, out of the mouths of babes and sucklings can ordain strength.

No one who believes the sacred Scriptures to be a divine revelation, will deny the preaching of the gospel to be of divine appointment. “It hath pleased God,” saith an Apostle, “by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe”—but “the power is of God.” So that Paul may plant and Apollos may water, and God giveth the increase. This truth is, in theory, so generally admitted by all who have taken upon themselves the name of christians, that it needs no illustration—but its *practical* influence—alas! we fear it is known and felt by few. To all who feel interested in the spread of the Redeemer’s kingdom, and more especially those who have been called to, or have in prospect, the sacred office of the gospel ministry, are the following pages respectfully addressed.

AN ADDRESS
TO THE
CLERGY AND CHRISTIANS

OF ALL DENOMINATIONS, &c.

MUCH RESPECTED FATHERS AND BRETHREN,

You who are ambassadors for Christ, have taken upon you a heavy weight of responsibility. You may well adopt the language of the Apostle, and ask, "Who is sufficient for these things?"

"No other post affords a place,
"For equal honour or disgrace."

As the excellency of the power in giving success to the word preached, is of God, so the praise and glory must be ascribed to him alone. Let it therefore be kept in constant remembrance, that "He is jealous of his honour, and his glory he will not give to another."

When our Divine Master was about to depart from his disconsolate disciples, having opened their understandings that they might understand the scriptures, he addressed them thus: "And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high." He had before said, "Without me ye can do nothing"—and, "No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him." From these, and many other pas-

sages, and from what astonishing effects were produced by the power of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, it is needless to prove more fully the necessity of the co-operation of this divine agent, in order to the success of a preached gospel. But when we view the state of our churches—alas! have we not great reason to fear that whatever of *form*, of *orthodoxy*, of *gifts*, &c. may be there, that there is little appearance of the work and influence of the Holy Spirit? Will those, then, who now preach, and those who are preparing for the sacred ministry, “suffer the word of exhortation?” Will they condescend to receive a few hints, intended solely for the general good and their especial consideration, from one who is indeed the least of all saints, and who acknowledges himself to be altogether unworthy of tendering them?

The writer has thought much on the languishing state of religion in our churches, in our families, and in our hearts; and, having been led into an examination of the causes, has been constrained to adopt this conclusion—that, one of the principal causes of unsuccessful preaching, formal saying of prayers, and unprofitable hearing of sermons, is the neglect of the divine agency of the Holy Spirit. In words we admit the necessity of his blessed influences, but in reality—practically, we act as though we could dispense with them. But, if it be a truth that “No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost,” how can any one preach, or pray, or hear, or read to profit, without his sacred influence and teaching? And yet what mournful evidence have we of the criminal neglect (to say the *least*) of those who are called to the performance of important and arduous duties, and who spend their time and labour, principally in making such preparation only, as will recommend them to their fellow men, while comparatively little time

and pains are employed in seeking the aid of that "Wisdom which cometh from above, and which is above all."

We are not much concerned as to the mode of preparing and delivering sermons, although we believe no man can study to advantage without using his pen; and if a sermon be well studied, and the importance of the subject and object well digested and understood, and especially, if it be accompanied with the influence of the Holy Spirit in the delivery, it will not make any essential difference whether it be committed to writing or committed to memory. In such cases we cannot suppose that the preacher will always be confined to any set form of words, for where the Spirit of God is, there is liberty, and his divine teaching ought ever to have the precedence. The apostle's exhortation to Timothy, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth," presupposes, as we conceive, the diligent use of his natural powers, with an entire dependance on supernatural aid: nor can we believe that these can be separated without a direct and manifest violation of the order and harmony which God has ordained in qualifying men for the work of the ministry, at the same time that the success and increase must come from him.

But it may be objected by some, that all ministers of the gospel do seek and pray for the aid of the Divine Spirit, and that, therefore, we are only fighting a shadow, or as one who beateth the air. Would to God that this were truly the case. Is it indeed the truth, that ministers or private christians practically realize that "of ourselves we can do nothing,"—that "we know not what we should pray for as we ought,"—that "the things of God are foolishness to the natural or unregenerated man," and that the same almighty power by which

Christ was raised from the dead, is necessary to raise a soul dead in sin, to newness of life? Do the preachers of the gospel keep habitually in mind, when making preparation for the services of the sanctuary, that all their labour will be unavailing, unless accompanied by the influences of the Spirit of Grace on the hearts of their hearers? And with what earnestness and diligence should they seek, as a foundation for their hope and expectation in this all important concern, to experience the power and grace of this Divine Instructor on their own hearts? This would give them the tongue of the learned, to speak a word in season to the weary, and make them *wise* to win souls—this would enable them to give to saint and to sinner their portion in due season, and help them rightly to divide the word of truth. Instead of formal, dull, and lifeless services, we might expect under the guidance of this divine teacher, that the hearts of ministers and people would burn within them while he opened to them the sacred scriptures.

We wish not to seem to intimate that this gift of God, this promised comforter to the church and people of God, can be obtained by any efforts or agency merely human; or, that we can by our most zealous endeavours, and our most importunate requests secure his divine presence and aid at all times. Of ourselves we can do nothing; but, by faith in the adorable Redeemer and the word of his grace, we can do all things. Here is something truly enigmatical to those who are strangers to the precious word of life—and there are many enigmas in a believer's experience.—They are weak, and they are strong; having nothing, and yet possessing all things. Many passages of scripture might be adduced, as well as the experience of the saints to prove this position.

It has been strongly impressed upon the mind of the writer, and it has been part of his experience, that we are exceedingly defective in our views and notions of the medium by which the great head of the church now communicates with his people. Our Divine Saviour informs us (John, xvi. 7, 8,) "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you: and when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment." Now, ye heralds of the cross, in what way do ye hope for success in the great work of converting sinners unto God? Is it by the power of the Holy Spirit accompanying the word? If so, surely you will spend much time in praying for his gracious influences; and, it will be the burden of your requests that this heavenly guest may take up his residence in your hearts, and you will carefully attend to the important direction given by the apostle, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

If it be a truth that the success of the gospel depends entirely upon the influence of the Holy Spirit, how careful—how circumspect should those be to whom this precious message has been committed; lest by an unholy walk and conversation, they grieve the divine Messenger, and thereby prove the occasion of their own, and their hearers everlasting ruin! How should this consideration solemnize the mind and affect the heart! How should it prevent the frothiness, foolish talking and jesting which are not convenient, and ought, especially in ministers, to be carefully avoided! Under the Old Testament dispensation none were eligible to the office of the priesthood who had any defect or blemish in his bodily parts: and under the gospel how holily and unblamably and irreproachably should the minister of Christ walk, that, as the apostle

exhorts, they may be an example to believers, in word, in purity and doctrine? How important, yet how difficult for many to say with an apostle, "I am pure from the blood of all men." But how great will be the joy and crown of rejoicing of faithful ministers, in the day of our Lord Jesus. "They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars forever and ever."

But the faithful minister's happiness is not limited to rewards which are future: what though you are at times cast down, yet you often experience a joy that strangers intermeddle not with. "Be not weary in well-doing, for in due season ye shall reap if ye faint not." The great captain of your salvation hath chosen you to be his soldiers—to be leaders under his banner. Be strong, therefore, in the Lord, and in the power of his might, and take to you the whole armour of God. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who hath called him to be a soldier. Since ye have known him and embarked in his service, lacked ye any thing? We are persuaded ye will answer—nothing.

There are, however, it is to be feared, those who from mistaken or no better motives, have entered into this honourable service without being called of God. To all such it must be a heavy burden; but that is not all—"If the blind lead the blind, both must fall into the ditch." Alas! alas! ye ministers who have never felt the burden of sin, the love of Christ, the worth and value of souls, what have you to do with this office? "Who hath required this at your hands?" How dishonourable to assume a character, and especially such an important one as that of an ambassador of Christ, when you have no credentials to produce, no evidence to yourselves or to others, of such an appointment. Of all men living, ministers of the gospel, without grace and an

experimental knowledge of the truths they preach, are the most miserable. They are miserable in this life, their service being a perfect drudgery, and alas! their prospects as to futurity, how dark and melancholy!

Perhaps no single circumstance can more strongly prove the blindness and deceitfulness of the heart, than the fact that men will continue through the whole course of a long life to act the part of teachers, and yet they themselves know neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.—Still they go on with as much ease and self complacence as if they were doing God service! What are we to suppose the views and feelings of a minister of the gospel to be, whose principal concern is to get the duties of his calling performed, but who feels no greater solicitude as to the effects to be produced, than if the gospel he has preached were a cunningly devised fable. Such preachers are not *merely* cumberers of the ground—there are no neutrals in this case, “He that is not for us is against us.”—What thinkest thou, reader, would be the advice of an unconverted minister in case one of his flock were to be convinced of sin, and brought to enquire “What must I do to be saved?” Would he give the same direction that was given by an apostle in a similar case, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved?” No, very different would be his advice—he knows of no such exercises as are experienced by the convinced and enquiring sinner; and, therefore, he would be seen to send the poor awakened soul to the world for comfort; or, if the case appeared to admit of no other cure, he would probably recommend the person as a fit subject for bedlam.

Thus will such blind watchmen not only not see the danger, and give warning of its approach, but, like unskilful workmen, they will daub with untem-

pered mortar, or sow pillows under the arm-holes of the slothful, saying, "ye shall have peace, though ye walk in the imagination of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes to add drunkenness to thirst."

—These are teachers who are ever thorns in the sides of the people of God. They are themselves blind, and they not only hate the light, but likewise all who have been brought to see the light.

Nothing will, perhaps, more excite the enmity and opposition of such, than to hear of revivals of religion—of souls being awakened, converted, and comforted. Such things are as smoke in their nostrils, and they cannot bear them. Revivals of religion have appeared to us as a very important test of the truth and reality, or the absence of christian faith in the professor, whether ministers or people. Piety will ever be concerned for the honour of God, and the advancement of his cause, and even where there is something to regret, as is often the case in revivals, there will be joy and rejoicing at what appears to be the work of the spirit of God. But formalists, who can never bear to hear of others going beyond their own line of things, will be on the *look out* only for flaws and failings; and, like flies, will leap over all the sound parts, and alight only on the sores.—We knew a formal professor who was relating with an air of triumph the case of a religious man who had been overtaken in a fault. While this circumstance caused self-gratulation to the formalist, a pious man who was present, and in nowise concerned but for the honour of God, on the bare recital of the tale, shed tears of sympathy. The truly pious man is always concerned for the cause of God; he has bowels of compassion for a fallen brother.—How then can he exult at the success of the enemy of God and man?

Another grievous consequence of the neglect of the agency of the Holy Spirit in our churches and

families, is that of which the prophet complains, "They have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying peace, peace, when there is no peace." The popular sentiment, now-a-days, seems to be, that conviction for sin is hardly necessary to prove the conversion of the soul to God—whereas both scripture and christian experience teach another lesson. Like blossoms in the spring precedeth fruit, so conviction must precede conversion. "The whole need not the physican, but they that are sick."

How often are the fairest prospects blasted, and where there appeared many blossoms no fruit is to be found. Many have been almost christians—many have put on the form, but are ignorant of, and even *deny* the power of godliness—many for a time run well, but do not continue to obey the truth. That master in Israel, Mr. Flavel, says, "The soul that is thoroughly convinced of sin, will have as different views of it from those it had formerly, as a person would have, who formerly seen only the lion painted on the sign-post, and should now meet the living lion roaring against him in the street." "You are likely," continues the same pious author, "to have some sick days and restless nights. That frothy heart must be smitten, if you are ever brought savingly to close with Christ by faith. How can it be otherwise, when we consider the native pride and obstinacy of the human heart? Will the healthy send for the physician? Will the rich beg for bread? Will any but the destitute seek covering or shelter? Or, will any but the weary and heavy laden long for rest?—surely none.

The work of conviction by the Holy Spirit answers now, in some respects, to that of John the Baptist—to prepare the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight. What preparation must

there not be wanting in a heart in love with sin and the world, and averse to all that is spiritual and good? The law of God applied to the conscience, is often a severe, though necessary teacher in this case; and, even under its most powerful operations, how will the proud heart cleave to its own boasted performances, until it is fairly beaten off from all its resting places and refuges of lies, when at length it is brought to the brink of ruin, and in the act of sinking, is enabled to cry, "Lord, save or I perish," where is boasting then? it is excluded. Then is the prey taken from the mighty, and the lawful captive delivered. "The Mount of Danger is the place where sinners find surprising grace." In persons grown to years of understanding, without any saving knowledge of God, we can conceive of no probable way in which they can be brought to a saving acceptance of Christ, but through the operation of the Holy Spirit, convincing them of sin, and reducing them to the happy necessity of seeking refuge in Christ. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." "They shall be all taught of God." "The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and hearing, they shall live."

How little danger now appears to be apprehended with regard to foundation-principles! A profession of religion—a mere outside appearance is enough; and, for a moment to doubt, or call in question the truth and reality of a work of grace, even where there are no visible evidences of it, would be to violate the great law of Christian charity! We would not encourage, or even countenance a censorious spirit—no, where there is any tenable ground, charity hopeth all things. But is there no criterion by which we are to judge for ourselves, and even by which we may with safety direct others? Is there no danger of building a stately fabric on a sandy foundation? Of spending our mo-

ney for that which is not bread, and our labour for that which satisfieth not? Of saying peace, peace, when there is no peace? Of having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof? Of saying, I am rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing, when at the same time the poor self-deceiver is, in reality, wretched, and miserable, and blind and naked? Where is now the skilful hand of an Edwards,* of a Flavel,† of a G. Tennent, of a Whitefield? Alas! is the heart less dutiful than formerly, or are there but few who are sufficiently aware of its wickedness and deception, and care for such things?

We had good assurance of the truth of the following facts and circumstances, which happened about twenty-one years ago; and we now give them as an evidence of the honour which God hath been pleased to put upon his faithful servants and their labour of love, even after they themselves have entered into the joys of their Lord.—A young man who had received a religious education, and had been brought up in a regular attendance upon religious duties, after having passed through the regular forms of catechising, examination, &c. was received into the communion of the church, and had been for several years a regular and orderly professor of religion—was frequent in the performance of religious duties both in public and in private, and at times was much under the impression of the truths of the gospel. He had however, considerable doubts and misgivings with respect to the truth of his religious experience, and had no recollection of any particular work of grace upon his heart. He was conscious, however, of having never intended to deceive any by the profession he had made, but he generally felt an unwillingness to en-

* Edwards on the Affections. † Touchstone of Sincerity.

ter into close conversation on the subject of experimental religion. In conversation with a friend, he heard Edwards on the Religious Affections highly spoken of; especially, as being admirably calculated to discover the deceitful workings of the human heart. Not long afterwards, and at a time when he was under considerable depression respecting his state, the providence of God brought this book into his hands, and he opened it with an anxious desire to know its contents. The place to which his attention was directed (having opened it promiscuously) was page 278, on which are the following words:—"But that which is the true saint's superstructure, is the hypocrite's foundation." After reading these words over and over—and ruminating upon them, he was led to construe them thus: the person who is self-deceived, has never been brought to see the necessity of Christ as a foundation, and of course he has none. He has, therefore, been laying down the shreds of duties, tears, &c. &c. as a support for his wavering hope, and thus has he been erecting a building upon the sand instead of building upon Christ. This was powerfully applied to his own case, and he soon perceived that when weighed in the balance he was found wanting. His convictions became deep and pungent, and continued for about three months, during which time, the things of God well nigh drank up his spirits, and he was often ready to say—there is no hope! At length he had reason to believe that "the prey was taken from the mighty, and the lawful captive delivered." He was brought out of the horrible pit and the miry clay, and to him was it given to experience joy and peace in believing. He was ever afterwards of the opinion that he had been, previous to this change, under the power of self-deception, and had had only the form of godliness, without knowing the power thereof,

There is one thing which, we conceive, Satan makes use of as a powerful means of blindfolding many professors of religion, and keeping them fast in his chains, to wit: When the Holy Spirit by his word, or by any other means, brings conviction to the conscience and makes plain the fallacy of the formalist's hope, there is an immediate remedy at hand in the evil suggestion, that we ought never to entertain any doubt respecting our good estate, for this would be to cherish and promote the dreadful sin of unbelief. Whereas the word of God directs us to examine ourselves whether we be in the faith, and to prove our own selves. But, alas ! how much pains do we often take to deceive ourselves in matters of eternal concern ! Would we in any other case reject the convictions of our own minds, especially when outward circumstances fully corroborate the testimony of conscience ?—Surely we do not. It must indeed be so, that the god of this world blinds the minds of hypocrites and poor self-deceived souls, otherwise the light of the glorious gospel shining into to their hearts, should show them their character and danger.

Are we mistaken in our views when we consider that the great and principal end and design of preaching the gospel, to be to point out the wretched and dangerous condition of fallen man by nature.—The insufficiency of his own righteousness—the fulness there is in Christ—the necessity of being united to him by faith and being renewed in the spirit and temper of our mind, so as to be in reality new creatures. If these things are so, would it appear strange to find the principal aim and object of preachers to be, to bring their hearers to ascertain to what description of character they belong ; for, it is admitted on all hands, that every congregation is divided into two general classes, namely, saints and sinners : and between

These the skilful workman rightly divides the word of truth, and gives to each their portion. Now let us suppose that many in a congregation consider themselves saints, when in reality they have no claim to that character, how awfully dangerous must be their situation! They snatch at the children's bread, and are completely shielded from all that would have a tendency to alarm them, were they conscious of their true situation. Is it not then an imperative duty on the part of the minister of the gospel to search Jerusalem as with lighted candles, and try to find out such as have become *sermon proof*? It cannot be so very difficult a matter for a scribe, well instructed, and under the influence of the Divine Spirit in a comfortable degree, to point out many of the lurking places, where such poor deluded mortals are covering themselves, and saying, "I shall have peace."

We have often witnessed much time and labour spent in pointing out particular vices, to which, perhaps, few, if any who were present, were addicted, and the dreadful consequences of these vices plainly declared. We have, in some instances, thought that the preacher's strength might have been more profitably employed in endeavoring to persuade all, whether moral or profane, to come to the sinner's only hope, the Lord Jesus Christ.—When we hear ministers dwell so long on gross and particular vices, are not hearers liable to infer that all who are not chargeable with these, are in a hopeful state? And under such sermons, we are greatly mistaken, if, the carnal heart will not exult in its supposed safety, and on hearing the dreadful condition of the openly profane, undoubtingly conclude that they should "thank God that they are not like other men."

We have been, and, perhaps, still are possessed of a singular notion respecting *hopes*. To live

without hope and without God in the world is truly dreadful and to be dreaded ; but we have formed an opinion that scarcely any thing stands more in the way of the gospel, than this general or fashionable hope. Like those described by the Prophet Isaiah lvii. 10, “Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way : yet saidst thou not, there is no hope : thou hast found the life of thine hand ; therefore thou wast not grieved.” Is it to be supposed that carnal men could remain at ease and careless under a faithful ministry, if they had not a false hope ?—Most assuredly they could not. And if we were at liberty to give counsel to those we esteem so much our superiors, as was said in another case—fight neither with small nor great but with this soul-deluding *hope* ! This hope, like a shield, quenches all the arrows shot from the gospel bow, and nothing but the power of Him who is stronger than the strong man armed, can reduce this fortress of the carnal heart.

The pious Mr. R. Erskine (than whom, we have seldom met with a more skilful guide) in his gospel sonnets—a book worthy to be printed in letters of gold—speaking against legal preaching, has the following sentiment :

“ Much rather ought we in God’s name to place
His great artillery straight against their face,
And throw hot *Sinai* thunder-bolts around,
To burn their towering hopes down to the ground :
For, none believe in Jesus as they ought
Till first they do believe they can do nought, }
Nor are sufficient e’en to form a thought.
They’re conscious in the right believing hour,
Of human weakness and of Divine Power.”

We would here take the liberty of recommending this much-neglected book to all seriously disposed persons ; and, especially to students of divinity, as containing a fund of evangelical and practical

piety, which will not fail to compensate the pious reader for his trouble, and may afford to the young preacher a useful lesson on the subject of his duties, as a gospel minister.

As an instance of the success with which God is pleased to crown the labors of his faithful ministers, we gave a short account of one who received great benefit from the writings of Edwards. We will now mention another case, recorded in the Life of Mr. Flavel. —A foppish looking gentlemen called on Mr. Bolton (Mr. Flavel's Bookseller) to inquire for a play. Mr. B. told him, he kept no such books, and offered him Mr. Flavels's Treatise 'On keeping the Heart,' saying, it would do him more good than the book he was seeking. The gentleman spoke of it as the work of some fanatic, and observed if he took it, he would burn it. Mr. B. then said he should not have it but on condition of reading it, and if after having read it, he did not like it, he might bring it back and he would pay him his money. The gentleman promised he would read the book, took it and departed. A few weeks afterwards the gentleman returned dressed in a different habit, and with a grave countenance addressed Mr. Bolton thus: Sir, I have reason to bless God that ever I came into your house. The book has saved my soul, and I am now come to purchase a number of copies for distribution.

If the reader should prize these anecdotes as highly as some others have done, he will excuse the addition of the following: The surgeon of a ship which had just arrived at Dartmouth (Mr. Flavel's place of residence) having fallen into a state of melancholy, was led by the power of the adversary, to make an attempt upon his life, by stabbing himself in different places in a most shocking manner. The wounds on examination were supposed to be mortal, and the surgeon who was

called in to dress them, had no hope that the young man would long survive them. He, however, sewed up the wounds, and to the utmost of his skill performed the duties of his profession. Mr. Flavel was sent for, and introduced to the young man in this wretched situation. He inquired of him what his prospects were in the near approach of death? The youth replied that he had hope in God. Mr. Flavel observed to him that he feared his hopes were ill founded, and pointed out to him, the evil nature of sin, and particularly the sin which he had just perpetrated. It pleased the Lord to make use of this his faithful servant in bringing the unhappy youth to a sense of his guilt and danger, and he was brought to confess himself a miserable sinner and to weep bitterly. Mr. Flavel then endeavoured to pour the oil and wine of gospel grace into his wounded spirit, and prayed with and for him. It pleased God that, contrary to all human expectations, the young man recovered. Mr. Flavel attended him often during his confinement, and was the happy instrument of directing him to the blessed Jesus whose precious blood cleanseth from all sin, however great and aggravated.

We cannot omit another remarkable account of this man of God, as it shews he had power to wrestle with God, as a prince, and to prevail. On his passage from Dartmouth to London, in company with some of his friends, who as well as himself were suffering persecution for conscience sake—they were overtaken with a mighty tempest, insomuch that the master of the vessel, informed them that they were in the utmost danger; the vessel being tossed about by the waves, and the wind driving them towards the shore. In this situation Mr. Flavel invited all who could be spared off the deck to unite with him in prayer. Accordingly he made supplication with strong cries to Him who was able to save in

this hour of peril ; and his heart was greatly enlarged, and his confidence in God greatly strengthened and increased in the performance of the duty, and after committing himself and companions to the care and mercy of God he concluded. Upon which one came running to the cabin door, and called aloud, “ *God is a prayer-hearing God. The wind has become fair, and we are now sailing before it.*” This reader, was indeed the finger of God, and the account should increase our confidence in him.

We have unquestionable authority for believing that the writings of the holy Flavel, have been acknowledged by many of the pious settlers of Virginia and elsewhere, to have been the means of their awakening to a sense of the importance of religion. O, that in our day the Lord of the harvest, would raise up and send forth many such, skilful and faithful labourers.

Might we not, both ministers and people, with humility and self abasement, inquire, “Where is the Lord God of Elijah?” Where is the spirit and zeal of our fathers? Are we not below their standard “by the head and shoulders?” And is their not a *cause*? Yes, verily; “we have forsaken the God of our Fathers, and hewn out to ourselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water.” Let us then humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, and cry mightily unto Him, and who knows but that he may think of us that we perish not. Let us under a deep sense of our remissness—of our criminal neglect of the God of our fathers, invoke the aid of the Holy Spirit.

Is it not the case with many ministers and professing christians, that although they profess to believe the Scriptures, yet as to any special agency of the Holy Spirit on the human heart, it seems to be taken for granted, that all such expectations are enthusiastic and vain? Is it not a natural conse-

quence, that under the influence of unbelief and insensibility, we should lay aside the very substance of the gospel of the grace of God? Is it wonderful, this being the case, that we should travel on through a dull and formal round of religious duties, and feel little or nothing of the strengthening and consolatory power of religion upon our hearts? Is it strange under these unpropitious circumstances, that the heralds of the cross should spend their strength in vain? That they should labour for nought? In reviewing your want of success, will ye not, O ye, who labour for souls, weep between the porch and the altar, saying, "Spare thy people O Lord, and give not thy heritage to reproach." And to us who are hearers of the Gospel, also belongeth shame and confusion of face, because we have sinned and have not improved, as was our duty, this merciful day of our visitation.

What does it avail us to read of the long list of worthies, whose example is left for our benefit, Heb. xi.—"who through faith subdued kingdoms—wrought righteousness—obtained promises—stopped the mouth of lions—quenched the violence of fire—escaped the edge of the sword—out of weakness were made strong—waxed valiant in fight and turned to flight the armies of the aliens"—if we are not to be animated and encouraged by their example, and have not good ground to hope that their God is our God; and that his power and grace are as ample and sufficient, and as ready to be communicated to his suffering people now, as in former days! We may not now be tried by fire, nor be cast into the lion's den, but does it follow that we can have no proof of the power and grace of God, because our trials appear not so formidable to flesh and blood? We think not. Who that has been called to do business on the deep and hoisterous waters of temptation, but can say, "If it

had not been the Lord who was on our side, &c. ?” If under heavy trials and bereaving dispensations, the christian can encourage himself in God and rejoice in him as the God of his salvation when all creature comforts are cut off, saying with the pious Newton,

“ This burning bush was not consum’d
Because the Lord was there,”

may he not be a witness of God’s unchangable power and love ? We are aware that the minds of men are somewhat differently constituted, and that some can bear the shocks of adversity with more fortitude than others, yet we believe that when the soul is led to cleave to God under bereavements, and to quietly rest upon Him, this is the Lord’s doing, and he should have the praise. In this way how many have had cause to bless God, and to say, “ It was good for me that I was afflicted.”

If the preceding reflections be correct, how greatly mistaken are those who rest satisfied with a mere profession, and who consider an attendance on gospel ordinances, the sum and substance of their duty ? And how liable to misconstruction on their own part, is the conduct of ministers, who discover much zeal to persuade their hearers to come to the Lord’s Table, without taking much pains to ascertain whether they have reason to hope they have previously come to the Lord Jesus Christ by faith ? And is it not a lamentable truth that when once a religious profession is made, although the person previous to his joining himself to the people of God, had no idea of any change of heart, or of views, yet afterwards, what usually seems to be implied in the profession, is, usually, taken for granted ; and if the Lord prevent not, the poor soul settles down on a false hope which must at last perish with its possessor.

We cannot but view it as a special blessing to any congregation to have a pastor whose preaching tends to this all-important—this essential point, namely to detect the hope of the hypocrite. The true believer will derive great advantages from close, searching preaching, as he is well acquainted with the depths of deceit, which is to be found in the human heart, and receives benefit from every new discovery of it; and to those who know nothing of religion but the name, this preaching is indispensable. Their salvation depends upon their being discovered to themselves in their true character; and how can this be effected, unless the minister shews them that their refuges are false, and endeavours to apply the sword of the spirit to their particular case?

We would now attempt to furnish some of those marks, which, from Scripture, observation and experience, we have considered to be indicative of a work of grace. And where these are found, encouragement should be taken to follow on to know the Lord. It may be proper to premise that our remarks are made with reference to those only, who have arrived at years of discretion, and who have not any very correct views of religion, or any matured dispositions to serve and glorify God.—We will also state, that we heartily disapprove of any particular mode or orderly succession of religious exercises, as a test by which we are to form our opinions; such a test, we conceive, wholly unwarranted by the Holy Scriptures and derogatory to the sovereignty of that God who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. “How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out.”

The first thing we shall notice, is, that religion is not a mere negative quality of the mind. The supposing that religion is the absence of certain

evil notions and practices, has been the ground of deception with many persons. The Pharisee's piety was chiefly of this kind—"God, I thank thee that *I am not* as other men, &c." Some who have received a religious education, and been preserved from breaking out into gross sins are deceived by this negative goodness, and very often this circumstance renders their case more dangerous and alarming, as they are ever ready to say with the young man in the gospel, "All these have I kept from my youth up, what lack I yet?"

In the second place it may be noticed that the work of the Spirit in its first and indeed in its subsequent operations, has respect chiefly to inward, and not so much to outward things. Converse with the poor awakened soul, and see the burden of his complaint. Suppose his past life to have been ever so regular and free from immoral practices, does this afford him a foundation on which to build? Far otherwise, perhaps he sees with much grief of heart, that abominable pride and hypocrisy which actuated all his performances, and he is now convinced that the God with whom he has to do, looketh upon the *heart*, and cannot be deceived. Follow him to his places of retirement (for he will be found in secret places,) and listen to the cause of his grief, and you shall find him lamenting over a hard, unbelieving, and therefore a wicked heart. Often in this state, it may be that not even a tear can be produced by all the struggles of nature. And the awakened sinner knows, as assuredly as he knows his own existence, that it is not within the compass of his power to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and to rest upon him alone for salvation. No, he would give ten thousand worlds were they at his command, to obtain this precious grace. He finds that faith is the gift of God, and that he has forfeited all right and title to his favour.

But the word of the Lord informs him, that Jesus is exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sin. This promise buoys up his drooping spirits and encourages his hope. At other times he may be tossed between hope and fear until he is disposed to give up all for lost—it is then he is thoroughly convinced that if he is ever saved, it must be by an act of sovereign grace through the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. Reader, have you ever known any thing of these heart-breaking exercises? If you have, you will perceive that this description, or any other that can be given, comes far short of the reality. If you have not experienced these things, then are we speaking to you in a language which you do not understand.

Again, the awakened sinner feels conscious that his convictions for sin and penitent distress, are not disproportioned to his case. And this impression is often so strong, that he even grieves and laments in language like this,

“Such grief as mine, a griefless grief,
Did ever any mortal share!”

Another trait in these exercises, and what frequently distinguishes them, is, a fear lest his convictions should wear off, without the desired end being accomplished. Alas! when we see men running to the world and vain amusements, for relief, with the arrows of conviction sticking fast in them, what a lamentable spectacle do they exhibit!

The manslayer under the law has appeared to us to be a striking emblem of the awakened sinner.—He knew it was not enough to have set out towards the city of refuge—there would be no safety until he was within its gates. So is it in this case, all reliance upon duties, prayers, &c. must be abandoned. There is but one place of safety, and thither, all the desires and endeavours of the poor sinner

are directed. "O," said David, "that some one would give me to drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate." O, saith the poor, longing, weary and desponding soul, that I could believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and rest upon him. In this situation it is worthy of remark, that outward, or worldly circumstances make very little difference—one only excepted—that is, if the immediate connexions of the person, say a father, mother, wife, husband, &c. should be hostile to this work, and set themselves to fight against God—O how dreadful the thought! How endangered are these—let all such know assuredly, that without a change of heart, and deep and bitter repentance, "the hottest hell will be their place."

When the soul is under conviction, how busy is Satan, if haply he may frustrate the birth of this man-child. How will he scatter the fiery darts and often set the poor soul all on flame! How will he suggest to the imagination (which is at such a time, little better than his work-shop) such things as will make the soul shudder and abhor itself.—How will Satan insinuate that to read the word of God is useless, and he too often succeeds in discouraging the soul from attending to this important duty. Ye who have been made to feel fiery darts of this wicked adversary, are not ignorant of his devices. You well understand what it is to be in heaviness through manifold temptations, and it is your duty to pray for such. Surely "ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt."

When the soul is sufficiently humbled, and driven from its false hopes, and when that great idol self-will, with its attendants, pride and self-conceit, begin to totter, and the poor self-condemned, helpless creature gives up all for lost, and is brought to cry "save Lord or I perish," in these circumstances

the sun of righteousness arises with healing in his beams, and the Lord shews himself mighty to save. No language can describe the sensations of the poor, weary, tempted and tossed soul, when by faith it is enabled to rest on the blessed Redeemer.

“ Now I know thy promis'd rest
Can compose a troubled mind.
You that weary are like me,
Hearken to the gospel call,
To the ark for refuge flee,
Jesus will receive you all.”

We have never been inclined to favour the opinion, that assurance is of the nature of faith, or that a strong confidence in the safety of our own state, constitutes the highest enjoyment in religion. On the contrary we believe that it frequently happens, that under the most pleasing and soul-satisfying views of gospel truth and the excellency and suitableness of the glorious Redeemer, the soul is unconscious of any appropriating act of faith, and yet rejoices with joy unspeakable and full of glory.— It is not our design to exclude a due regard to the recompense of reward to which Moses had respect, and which must greatly tend to the encouragement of the suffering and afflicted people of God, under their distresses; but does it follow that such selfish considerations must necessarily be the life and spring of the christian's highest enjoyments, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, and the love of God shed abroad in the heart. We were almost ready to say to those who would offer us such mercenary comforts, “ thy money perish.”

We have already spoken of some of the exercises of the awakened sinner, previous to, and at the time of his receiving Christ: we come now to mention some of the views and exercises of christian experience.

And first, we say, that the christian has, in reference to God and divine things, but one purpose and aim. This in some respects, resembles the magnetic needle, which may in a variety of ways be drawn aside, yet its principle and tendency remain the same. An officer who exposes his life in the service of his country, and who has no interests but in subserviency thereto, may nevertheless, by an unguarded step or unwatchful conduct, be surprized and taken prisoner. Yet although he may have cause to censure himself, he may have no cause whatever of self-reproach on account of his want of true attachment to his prince or country. So we conceive is the case of the humble believer, he is aware of his own weakness, and the power and malice of his numerous adversaries. The world, the flesh, and the devil, constitute a truly formidable resistance to his progress Zion-ward. But all the opposition he meets with from without, he esteems as trivial, compared with the body of sin and death he feels within. Here is the fountain of the great deep, which, though broken up, never ceases to cast forth mire and dirt. Alas! poor trembling believer, you have abundant cause to groan, being burdened. Your greatest enemies are those of your own house—your own heart; and no prospect of getting a complete deliverance from their raging power: well may you say, “The storm would cease could I but cast this troublous Jonah overboard.” But this *you* cannot do. And is there then no hope? “Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

But there is another ground of encouragement, and that is, “There remaineth a rest for the people of God.” This is joyful tidings to the poor, weary, war-worn soldier; he is hastening to a kingdom prepared for him, “There the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest. There the

prisoners rest together, they hear not the voice of the oppressor."

Another mark of true religion is, it seeketh not its own profit or advantage only. Not its own honour, but the honour of God and the advancement of his cause. Men of the world, and formalists in religion, can look with complacency on whatever goes not beyond their own standard; but speak to them of things which would imply that they are defective, and you will look in vain for their friendship and approbation. Perhaps there is no one passion of the human breast more difficult to be concealed than envy; who indeed can stand before it? But the subjects of God's grace will be disposed by it to esteem others better than themselves, and to rejoice in the advancement of religion, whoever God may honour as his instruments.

Another effect produced by religion on the heart, is, that a regular and constant attendance on christian duties, without feeling more or less of the power and presence of God in these duties, will not satisfy those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious. Whoever can be contented with the bare performance of religious duties, however exact and regularly attended to, may justly conclude that he has only the form of godliness without its power. If we would carefully inquire, in our calm and settled moments, into the direction and bent of our thoughts and desires when they are freed from the influence of outward attractions, we might ascertain with tolerable precision, what manner of spirit we are of. Would we think it possible, that a person who has experienced the evils of sin—is aware of the power and subtlety of his enemies—the necessity of watchfulness, and especially, the inestimable privilege of praying without ceasing, should not frequently, nay, generally, feel his thoughts and desires tending towards God and the word of his

grace, in his hours of retirement, and often amidst the busy throng.

If we may judge from appearances, we are ready to conclude that there are, comparatively, few who think or believe that there is any thing in religion which is known and enjoyed by the christian only; yet the scriptures are very explicit on this subject. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned; but he that is spiritual judgeth all things."

The near affinity into which *modern* religion has taken the world, (since the world refuses to embrace religion,) induces those who wish to be the friends of both, to conclude that the connexion may be drawn still closer, and that in this way religion may become respectable and popular. But like Joab in the case of Amassa, though the world may put on an aspect friendly to religion, and say "art thou in health my brother?" yet there is a dagger concealed, which will be used when occasions serve.

We might proceed to enumerate many other marks of a work of grace—such as love to the brethren, growth in grace—hatred of sin, &c. but our prescribed limits have already been transcended. We now intreat all, who, on weighing these important matters, may have cause to doubt the truth and reality of what they may have considered their religious experience, to reflect on the danger of a mistake in a work of so much importance, and to admit the light of conviction which may shine upon their minds. If we have heretofore been in error, shall we still pertinaciously cling to our delusions, and refuse to let them go? God forbid. "To know ourselves diseased is half our cure." There is balm in Gilead, and a skilful Physician there, for all who are sick and wounded; but the whole need not his aid.

Cry mightily unto God for the aid and influence of his Holy Spirit, and in reference to this important point, adopt the language of the Psalmist, "Search me O God, and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

A
PRACTICAL ESSAY
ON THE INFLUENCE
OF THE
HOLY SPIRIT
ON THE HEART.

PRACTICAL ESSAY, &c.

IF the truth were generally received, and suitably felt and applied, that "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God," how different would be our views and apprehensions of the gospel of our salvation!—How daring and preposterous would it appear for a rebellious worm—a condemned sinner, to "reply against God," and call in question his right to the government of the universe. We would at once see the unreasonableness and absurdity of "the thing formed saying to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?"

The sin which hurled from their seats the angels who fell, was pride and rebellion against their rightful sovereign; and one of the fatal baits which the Tempter so alluringly and successfully displayed to our first parents, was, "ye shall be as Gods." And may we not assert, that it must appear obvious to every observing mind, that the general tendency of the human heart, in its natural estate, is in direct opposition to the law and government of God—as saith the apostle, "The carnal mind is enmity against God, it is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be."

The mind of an unrenewed man resembles the world in its chaotic state; and it may therefore be said with truth, "That darkness covers the face of this great deep," and before any saving change can be effected, "He that commanded the light to shine out of darkness, must shine into the heart, to give

the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

The Holy Spirit, the third person in the adorable Trinity, is the blessed agent in preparing the heart of a sinner for the reception and application of the grace of the gospel: and to point out some of the effects of his operation on the heart, is the principal design of the present Essay.

The first effect we notice, is, **CONSIDERATION**. Nothing is more evident, than the thoughtless inconsideration which marks the character and conduct of mankind generally, and especially of youth. —Hurried along by a desire to gratify their senses, and in constant expectation of the full fruition of some fancied enjoyment, the language of their hearts and of all their pursuits is, “Who will shew us any (earthly) good.”

In this mad career they practically say, “There is no God:” and not unfrequently is it answered, “We desire not the knowledge of his ways.” At certain times the more bold and daring even venture insultingly to enquire, “Who is the Lord, that we should obey his voice?” and of the best in an unrenewed state, it must be said, they are “Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God”—“they mind earthly things”—“their hearts are not [therefore] right in the sight of God.” Again, we read in the sacred scriptures, that there are those, who, having a form of godliness deny the power thereof.—Who, having a name to live, are dead.—Who say, “peace, peace, when there is no peace.” Some of the means by which the sinner is usually brought seriously to *consider* his ways, are the following:

First, The Holy Spirit, by the instrumentality of the word, ushers a ray of Divine light into the dark mind, whereby the poor sinner begins to have some imperfect apprehensions of the general truths of the gospel, and perhaps his attention is at first

drawn to some sin which, like Lucifer among the fallen angels, appears above all the rest.—Fear, the concomitant of guilt, assails his mind, and conscience, perhaps hitherto unnoticed or unknown, confirms the painful accusation, and points out a long and black catalogue of sins of youth and of riper days, which seem, like the blood of Abel, to cry aloud for vengeance. Here a serious pause ensues. Let but a man be brought thus to see himself and thus to consider his ways, and what an alteration is manifest in his whole deportment!—All lightness, frothiness, and levity now ceases.—He sees and feels that it is indeed an evil and a bitter thing to sin against the living God. His thoughts settle down to seriousness, and his meditations fix upon his deplorable and miserable estate; and as yet his case seems scarcely to admit of a ray of hope. In this condition, it often happens that he is assailed by the enemy of souls, and not unfrequently by his carnal friends, who endeavour to dissuade him from indulging in this melancholy mood, and to be persuaded to shake off all serious reflexion, and to cherish other thoughts, and indulge in the amusements and levities of a thoughtless world.—Here indeed is an interesting point in the life of a sinner; but, where the work is of God, and its effects in conformity, the Holy Spirit directs the attention of the convinced sinner to the extent and purity of the divine law and its awful penalty. He now resolves that he will betake himself to all the duties it enjoins, and virtually says to his maker “Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all!” But here a serious difficulty intervenes—he finds his heart wholly ungovernable, and his duties so dull and formal, that he can scarcely bear with them himself; besides, he finds his heart instead of growing more soft, submissive, and obedient, is growing worse and worse; and even his

convictions, which he once thought indications of something favourable, (at least in hope,) seem now to have nearly vanished, like the morning cloud and early dew, and he is placed in circumstances in which his prospects darken every hour.—He is now ready to say with Job, “I go forward but he is not there, and backward but I cannot perceive him—O that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his scat.”

In this situation how important is a faithful spiritual guide—one who knows how to speak a word in season to him that is weary, and yet will not daub with untempered mortar—a workman who knows how to divide aright the word of truth. The poor awakened sinner now is brought to a sense of his misery and impotency, and he now opens his mouth in strong voices and with many tears, for grace and pardon: but, it may be, he has conceived an idea that his prayers and tears must necessarily obtain the divine favour and blessing, and he thinks his duties must bind Jehovah; because it is written, “Seek and ye shall find.” But here he finds no resting place, because he reads that “Without faith it is impossible to please God”—and faith he has none, for the Holy Spirit convinces him of unbelief, which, until now, he had entirely overlooked and neglected as forming any part of his heavy score. Now he is led to cry for faith, and to enquire what is faith, and how shall I obtain this all-important grace? Where the work is genuine, the soul is now stirred up to great jealousy and alarm for a successful rather than an immediate issue to its troubles, and led to examine every thing which is susceptible of being counterfeited, with the strictest scrutiny. The Lord Jesus appears now the only hope, but how shall the poor withered arm lay hold on his righteousness? Will the Saviour look upon such an unworthy wretch?

There are, doubtless, a great variety of degrees in the depth and pungency of the convictions of sinners; but, that all are made sensible of their ruined estate, and brought to a just abhorrence of sin, and of themselves on account thereof, is manifest from scripture and experience. Nor is it at all to be wondered at that the soul awakened to a sense of its vileness and the hateful nature of sin, should feel it extremely difficult to derive any comfort from the offers of the gospel.—It is often the case, that there is no doubt entertained of the truth and sincerity of gospel overtures, nor of the sufficiency of the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ and his ability to save, but then, the soul looks back upon its sins under all their aggravating circumstances, and looks inward upon itself and sees nothing but pollution, and then virtually says with Peter, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.”—The soul in this case, cannot yet see how God can be just and yet the justifier of the ungodly; but under all its discouragements and conflicts, there is still an anxious solicitude to obtain solid rest.—Never, indeed, did the hireling more earnestly desire the shadow, nor the tempest-tossed mariner a haven of safety, than the convinced, heavy laden sinner now longs for a saving union to the Lord Jesus Christ by faith.—Let those who have found it easy to enter in at the straight gate by profession only, talk lightly of the deep and soul-humbling exercises of convinced sinners, and charge them with that most dreadful crime, enthusiasm, we believe none who have “known the heart of a convinced sinner” will speak lightly of this matter.

The awakened sinner, we may now suppose, has become in some good degree acquainted with the truths of the gospel, and the plan of salvation through a redeemer; he is also frequent in the performance of religious duties, and by comparing

his religious exercises with those of some professing christians, he may be led to place some confidence in these, and even derive some comfort from them; but after all the bed is too short and the covering too narrow—sin revives, the heart becomes callous; religious duties appear but as a dead sacrifice, and the sinner is now at his wit's end, and constrained to cry out with Peter, when sinking beneath the waters, "Save, Lord, or I perish." When the poor sinner is thus reduced to an unconditional surrender of himself, and finds that he is as helpless as he is miserable, it is usually then that he finds

"The Mount of Danger is the place
"Where God displays surprizing grace."

It is then, that in reading the holy scriptures, or, perhaps some pious book, in meditation or in prayer, the poor, weary, heavy-laden sinner is strengthened to cast a longing look to the Lord Jesus Christ, and discovering his suitableness and excellency, he accepts of him as offered in the gospel, as all his salvation and all his desire—as the chief among ten thousand, and one altogether lovely.—All this may take place, and yet the soul may be unconscious of its personal interest in the Saviour, and as the pious and discerning president Edwards has justly stated, "The soul, at such a season, would count it a great loss and privation to take off its thoughts and desires from the supreme object of its love, to calculate its own personal interest or advantage." That the desires of the soul in its first acceptance of, and union to, the Lord Jesus Christ, and in all subsequent seasons of communion with him, is essentially different, and originates in an entirely different source from those desires which are sordid, selfish, and common to men in their natural state, we have not the shadow of a doubt.—Even heathen morali-

ty reprobates those pretensions to friendship which are founded upon interested motives, and the justly admired author of the *Night Thoughts* inquires, "Can gold buy friendship? impudence of hope!" If we possess any genuine love to a friend, it must be for something which we discover amiable or lovely, entirely distinct from any good which we expect to derive from him; but if that friend should prove not only amiable, but also should rescue us from misery and bondage, and become our benefactor, then indeed, our gratitude would be excited, and our obligations increased. It will easily be perceived that love and gratitude, although often united, are yet different and distinct affections, and we can readily conceive of feeling gratitude to a benefactor whose character so essentially differs from what we approve, that we cannot cherish a love of complacency towards him.—The soul, however, that has fled to the Lord Jesus Christ for refuge, and felt the powerful attractions of his love, discovers itself bound by every possible obligation to love good works. Yes, the love of Christ constrains the believer, to a cheerful and willing obedience, and he no longer desires to live to himself, but to God—and having professed a good profession before many witnesses, he desires to adorn the doctrine of God his Saviour by a holy life—old things in him and to him are done away, and all things become new. His purposes and aim are fixed, and whatever changes he may experience and pass through, these never change:—his chief end and design is to glorify God, and his prevailing desire to attain conformity to his image. Sin has now become his heaviest burthen, and whatever trials and afflictions of a worldly nature he may be called to in this life, he can say in reference to them, they are light afflictions when compared with the evils which result from the remains of sin and unbelief,

under which he is still constrained to groan. The christian life is justly termed a warfare, and the duties of a soldier strongly characterize the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. No man that warreth, saith the apostle, entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier:—and the christian must beware how he permits his affections to be drawn off from the grand business of his life, that is, to do and to suffer the will of his divine master, lest he become weary and faint in his mind.—The Lord Jesus Christ is the great captain of our salvation, and we are directed to look to him as the author and finisher of faith. Could the christian but keep his eye steadfastly fixed upon him, and preserve his affections from an inordinate attachment to all beside, what peace would he possess, how many evils would he shun.

[This was to have been continued*——]

*These are the words of the Author.

SERIOUS HINTS

TO LOUD AND ALARMING

PREACHERS OF THE GOSPEL;

RECOMMENDED TO THE PERUSAL

OF THE

ORDERLY AND REGULAR

PROFESSORS OF RELIGION,

OF ALL DENOMINATIONS.

These that have turned the world upside down, are come hither
also. *Acts xvii. 6.*

SERIOUS HINTS

TO

LOUD AND ALARMING PREACHERS, &c.



IT was the command of our blessed Saviour to his disciples, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." Mark xvi. 15, 16. From this and other passages of the sacred scriptures, we infer, that all mankind by nature, are in a ruined estate: children of wrath and heirs of perdition. *Second*, We infer that the preaching of the gospel, being the ordinance of God, and the grand mean appointed by infinite wisdom for the salvation and recovery of lost sinners, it is of the greatest importance that those who are called to this office should faithfully discharge the duties of their high vocation. *Third*, That the scriptures represent, and experience and observation abundantly testify, that whatever men may assent to in theory, the great mass of mankind do not believe the declarations of God's word, in reference to their own case as individuals. Mankind are generally, as to their spiritual concerns, asleep, blind, deaf, nay, dead: so that multitudes under the blaze of gospel light, with which we are favoured, remain as insensible of their danger, as if they believed the gospel to be a cunningly devised fable. Under these circumstances, what is the duty of a faithful and wise minister of Christ? can it be to look on with indifference and see the thoughtless, careless multitude crowding with rapid pace the downward road! Is

it possible for him who has been taught by experience the absolute necessity of a change of heart and of disposition, and the value of an immortal soul, to remain unaffected and unmoved while he views the wretched and calamitous estate of multitudes whom he is called to address—can he do less than “cry aloud, and spare not?”—can he do less than *warn* such as he is unable to persuade?—can he do less than draw the bow at a venture, while his earnest prayer is, that God will direct the arrow of conviction to the sinner’s heart? For doing less than this, a minister could offer no excuse—for doing more, he needs no apology.

First. We inquire, is it the duty of the preachers of the gospel to cry aloud and sound the alarm? Consider the following passages:—

“To the law and to the testimony : if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” Isaiah viii. 20.

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” 2 Timothy iii. 16, 17.

“O son of man I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel, therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand—nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it, if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity, but thou hast delivered thy soul.” Ezekiel xxiii. 7, 8, 9.

“Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.” Isaiah lviii. 1.

“Therefore watch and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.” Acts xx. 31.

“I charge thee, therefore, before God and the Lord Jesus Christ who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom, preach the word, be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine.” 2 Timothy iv. 1, 2.

Contrast with the foregoing, the following scriptures:—

“And the serpent said unto the woman, ye shall not surely die.” Genesis iii. 4.

“They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying peace, peace, when there is no peace.” Jeremiah vi. 14.

“Because, even because they have seduced my people, saying peace and there was no peace, and one built up a wall, and lo! others daubed it with untempered mortar.” Ezekiel xiii. 10.

“Because with lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad, and strengthened the hands of the wicked that he should not return from his wicked way by promising him life.” *ibid.* xiii. 22.

What important considerations may not that saying of the apostle lead to? 2 Cor. iv. 7, “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels.” What treasure does the apostle here refer to? Doubtless the unsearchable riches of Christ in the free offers of the gospel. O ye servants of the most high God, who shew unto us the way of salvation, remember that divine injunction, “freely ye have received, freely give.” What would be our sentiments of a person who possessed an inexhaustible treasure, committed to him for gratuitous distribution, if he were to fold it up in a napkin; or hide it in the earth. Would he not, if possessed of the smallest

portion of benevolence, rather "search out the cause which he knew not," and save the starving millions from utter ruin. And may we not with propriety, and with an assurance of success, say to every pious minister, "go thou and do likewise."

Second. We next enquire, does the state of the hearers of the gospel require that ministers should endeavour to alarm their fears?

We know of no principle in fallen man, in his carnal and unregenerate state, by which he can be actuated in the concerns of his soul, but fear, or a sense of the danger of his present condition. If the carnal mind be enmity against God, as is evident both from scripture and experience, then surely none will pretend that love to God can possibly exist where such a contrary principle predominates. Two cannot walk together except they are agreed—"since God or man must alter, ere they meet, 'tis evident Lorenzo who must change." We find throughout the scriptures of the Old and New Testament, this sentiment is recognized. Even Noah, moved with fear, built an ark to the saving of his house. The whole need not a physician, but those that are sick—that is, none will apply to the Lord Jesus Christ for pardoning and sanctifying grace, but those who are convinced that they are infected with the dangerous malady of sin. The law was our schoolmaster, saith the apostle to bring us to Christ: and in what manner but by threats of punishment for every non-compliance with its precepts, representing the necessity of another, a better righteousness? But we pass on to the conduct and language of Him who spake as never man spake. In what severe language does he address the Pharisees? "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers! how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" Matt. xxiii. 33.

“Ye shall receive the greater damnation.”—Matt. xxiii. 14.

“There were present at that season, some that told Jesus of the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you nay, but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”—Luke xiii. 1—23.

“Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord we persuade men.” 2 Cor. 5—11.

“Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee, for I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.”—Acts viii. 22, 23.

Is it possible that any person who professes the religion of the Bible, can suppose that the faithful ministers of the gospel, who feel the constraining love of Jesus, and the inestimable value of immortal souls can do otherwise than “Cry aloud and spare not?” It must be the determination of every faithful minister to know nothing among his hearers “but Jesus Christ and him crucified,” and this will necessarily lead to a willingness to spend and be spent in the glorious work of the ministry. “They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever.”

Our *third* inquiry will be, whether the scriptures of truth authorize and justify the alarming and importunate calls of ministers to their hearers to repent and turn to God?

The preaching of the word is the ordinance of God. “It pleased God, saith the apostle, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe.” 1 Cor. i. 21. The time for calling sinners home to God, is the *present time*. “Behold now

is the accepted time ; behold now is the day of salvation—to-day if ye will hear his voice harden not your hearts.” The apostle saith, “neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.” Shall the minister then, who stands, as it were, between the living and the dead—shall he not speak as a *dying man* to *dying men*? Shall he feel no bowels of compassion yearning over those who are covered with the leprosy of sin, and yet, see not, hear not, and understand not the gospel remedy ; but are saying, I shall have peace though I walk after the imagination of my own heart? Shall the messenger of the glad tidings of good-will to man—of pardon through the blood of Jesus, to the chief of sinners—shall he not be affected at the rejection of this gracious overture? May not the pious, zealous, and compassionate minister be excused, if he addresses himself to his drowsy or sleeping hearers in the language of the affrighted and panic struck mariners to Jonah, “What meanest thou O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God!” Does he need an apology for attempting to pluck a brand out of the burning, and to save a soul from death? Nay, rather let all who have tasted that the Lord is gracious—that Christ Jesus is a willing Saviour and able to save even to the uttermost, all that come unto God through him, and all who believe that the gospel now invites “whosoever will, to come and take of the water of life freely.” Let all such hold up the hands of the faithful heralds of the cross until the Lord make their words as the fire, and as the hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces. And let the zealous minister of Christ adopt the language of the pious Doddridge :

“ My God, I feel the mournful theme--
My bowels yearn o'er dying men ;
And, fain my pity would reclaim,
And snatch the fire-brands from the flame,
But feeble my compassion proves,
And can but weep where most it loves ;
Thine own almighty arm employ,
And turn these drops of grief to joy.”

A
WEEK'S MEDITATIONS;

BEING

AN ATTEMPT

TO PREPARE 'THE HEART'

FOR,

AND ANIMATE IT IN

THE PERFORMANCE OF DUTY.

A

WEEK'S MEDITATIONS, &c.

THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK, BEING THE SABBATH, OR LORD'S DAY.

MORNING MEDITATION.

THIS, my soul, is the "Sabbath of the Lord;" the day of sacred rest!—how welcome should it be to my weary, thirsty, fainting spirit! but alas! how little do I appreciate the unspeakable privileges of this day! how little do I realize the blessings with which it has often been accompanied! O, to be in the spirit on the Lord's day! to feel his sacred influence on my dull and stupid heart!—to experience those hungerings and thirstings after righteousness—those longings of the mind which have been familiar to thy favoured people in all ages of the church!—Awake, O north wind! and come thou south. Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon this dry and barren heart, that it may live!—Gracious Redeemer, "Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice, for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely!" O thou whom my soul loveth, or at least desireth to love, let me sit this day under thy shadow with great delight, and let thy fruit be sweet to my taste. Let my hard and rocky heart be melted, let it be opened to attend to thy word, whether spoken or read, and let it do me good as it doth the upright in heart.—O to be enabled to adopt the language of thy servant of old, and to say, "My heart is fixed,

"O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise." Let me with truth, and under the influence of the Holy Spirit, receive power to say in reference to thy holy worship, "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord," and "let the words of my mouth, and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer." Let me be protected by thy holy and good providence, this day, from any occurrence that would lead my thoughts from the contemplation of divine things, and let me be surrounded by thy presence as with a mighty shield, from all the attempts of men or devils to hinder my attendance upon thy worship, or to disturb my mind in the performance of duty.

"Sweet is the day of sacred rest,
 "No mortal cares shall seize my breast;
 "O may my heart in tune be found,
 "Like David's harp of solemn sound."

MEDITATION AFTER THE MORNING SERVICE IS
 ENDED.

"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings; that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good; that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, thy God reigneth." What sayest thou, my soul? Couldst thou say under the ministry of the word, "It is good to be here?" or were the ordinances to thee as dry breasts, without consolation or comfort? If the former, thou mayest and thou oughtest to say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." But if the latter, thou wilt most assuredly hang thy harp upon the willow:—thou wilt

seriously, and with anxious solicitude, inquire, wherefore this great evil has come upon thee, why thou hast derived no advantage from those precious channels of grace and favour which God hath graciously instituted for the edification and quickening of his people? How would the miser mourn over the misimprovement of a favourable opportunity to increase his riches, or the voluptuary to gratify his taste, and wilt thou, O my soul, esteem it a light thing thus to have lost an opportunity so precious? Well may thou adopt the words of the pious Cowper,

“Return, O holy dove, return
Sweet messenger of rest;
I hate the sins that made thee mourn,
And drove thee from my breast.
The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from thy throne,
And worship only thee.”

O, my soul! hast thou in any wise slighted or neglected the aid and influence of the Holy Spirit in thy morning preparation? Hast thou forgotten that thou art insufficient to think even a good thought, and that it is the peculiar province of this divine agent, to take of the things that are Christ's, and shew them to his believing people? If so, wonder not that thou hast been sent empty away from the pool of ordinances; but be not discouraged, although thou hast great cause to be humbled.—The king of Israel is a merciful king—go to him with the ropes of self-condemnation around thy neck, and say to him, “Father, I have sinned,” and who knows but he may compassionate thy case, come over the mountains of thy sin and folly, and bid thee go in peace. How sad will be thy case should

thou lose the advantages of a whole sabbath!—how wilt thou, O my soul, enter upon the business of the ensuing week, without some token, this day, of help from on high?—Well may thou say with the poet,

“Small wonder that I droop, alone
In such a dismal place,
When, lo! my dearest friend is gone,
My Father hides his face.”

But remember the adorable Redeemer spake a parable to this end: “That men ought always to pray, and not to faint.”

Go then, and at Jehovah's footstool bow,
Thou know'st not what a sov'reign God may do.

EVENING MEDITATION ON THE SABBATH.

ANOTHER day of the Son of Man is now near a close! what advantages have I received from the great privileges enjoyed this day? Examine carefully, my soul, into thy purpose, disposition, and aim, whilst thou art engaged in the performance of religious duties. What sayest thou of a dead and formal round of service, in which thy heart and affections have neither lot nor part?—Art thou satisfied and contented with such performances as these?—Is there no aching void within, no loathing and abhorrence of this dead sacrifice offered to the living God?—No disappointment to thyself? These are sure indications that although thou hast a name that thou livest, yet thou art in reality dead, spiritually dead. But are these things in reality so? Whence then thy sore complaints, thy inward groanings, thy mournings and deep lamentations

over thy lost opportunities, and thy hard and un-
believing heart? May thou not say with the poet,

“Cold as I feel this heart of mine,
Yet, since I feel it so,
It yields some hope of life divine
Within, however low.”

Thou art, most assuredly, conscious that thou dost attend upon means and ordinances with an expectation of meeting with God in them, and of receiving good from them, and does it not grieve thee to be sent empty away? What has been the experience of this day? Declare faithfully, O my soul, and say nothing now but what will be substantiated by conscience at the bar of God.—In thy morning preparations thou didst manifest an earnest and longing desire to enjoy the gracious presence of thy God and Saviour, through the power and influence of the Holy Spirit.—Thy forenoon services were dull and formal; the Lord hid his face and thou wast troubled; thou didst mourn, in thy complaint, and make a noise: the language of thy heart was, O that I knew where I might find him—but in the afternoon, under the preaching of the word, didst thou not receive a token for good? What were the feelings of thy heart while his ambassador opened to the view of thy mind, the precious truths contained in the holy scriptures? Did not thy heart burn within thee, and wast thou not ready to say, it is good to be here? And thou hast realized in this instance that is good for thee to draw near to God, and in his own appointed way. Well, then, art thou not encouraged to “follow on to know the Lord?” Canst thou not say, to the praise of rich, free, and saving grace,

“Now I know thy promis'd rest,
Can compose a troubled mind.

You that weary are like me,
Hearken to the gospel call ;
To the ark for refuge flee,
Jesus will receive you all."

THE SECOND DAY OF THE WEEK, BEING MONDAY.

MORNING MEDITATION.

I AM now about to venture again into an ensnaring world. O my soul, see that thou set a watch upon the door of thy lips this day, and keep thy heart with all diligence ; seeing out of it are the issues of life. And remember, that unless the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. Dost thou believe that the blessing of God is essential to thy success, even in the common concerns of life—that "Unless the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it." And dost thou neglect to seek the blessing of the most high ! Examine well that the business in which thou art this day about to engage, be lawful, and that thou canst with a good conscience, seek the blessing of God upon it. If the shadow of a doubt rests upon it in this respect, stop—proceed no farther, until this point be settled agreeably to the word of God and thine own conscience, having earnestly sought the aid and influence of the Holy Spirit as umpire in this important concern. Surely my soul, thou believest that thou hast to do with a holy, righteous, all-seeing, and omnipresent God. Then first approve thyself, thy purpose, and thy work to him, and then whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might. Be not discouraged although difficulties intervene and interrupt thy pursuit ; but "Commit thy way unto the Lord ; trust also in him, and he will bring it to pass." O, how

would it smoothe the rugged path of life—how would that spirit of distrust and anxious solicitude, be changed into composure and confidence in God, didst thou but realize as thou oughtest to do, that the Lord reigneth in the kingdoms of nature, of providence, and of grace ; and that a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his knowledge and permission. How much unnecessary anxiety and distress would it not prevent, did thou but attend to the direction of thy kind and gracious Saviour—“Take no thought for to-morrow ;” that is, undue, over-anxious, and sinful solicitude, and this to the great and criminal neglect of present and important duties. Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all necessary things shall be added thereto. What advantage, my soul, present, or future, canst thou derive from all this world calls good or great? Is there aught below the sun for which thou would exchange thy peace of mind, and willingly forego that peace of God which passeth all understanding? On entering, then, on the business of this day, cry mightily unto God for his presence and supporting grace. Well mightest thou say, “If thy presence go not with me carry me not up hence.”

MONDAY.

EVENING MEDITATION.

AND now another day is gone, what, my soul, have been thy views and feelings, during thy mercies and trials through the day past? Surely the retrospect will afford much ground for mourning and humiliation. So little improvement of time! so little provision for eternity! so little sensibility

under, and gratitude for mercies received ! so little disposition to do better for time to come ! But though there is much cause for humiliation, hast thou not, nevertheless, some ground of encouragement ? some reason to lift up thy heart in grateful acknowledgments for what thou hast this day experienced ? Hast thou my soul been exempted this day from any personal or family affliction, and from any particular trial or temptation from without, or from within, from men, or from Satan ? Hath no temptation befallen thee but such as is common to men ? then, “bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me be stirred up to bless his holy name ; bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits !” Although thou hast indeed much cause to be humbled even to the dust, under a sense of thy short-comings in every duty. Yet thou hast abundant cause to sing of mercy as well as of judgment, and to praise the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth forever. What then, my soul, is the improvement thou art called to make of the blessings of this day ?

1. Ascribe the glory and the praise of all to him from whom cometh every good and every perfect gift. 2. Let the goodness of God lead thee, O my soul, to true and genuine repentance, and to a more entire dependance upon God. Learn to live upon his word and to trust his promised grace. Let thy principal study and concern be to ascertain what is the path of duty. Before thou undertakest any thing, be fully persuaded in thy own mind, that it is in strict conformity with the mind and will of God, and then be not afraid, although an host should encamp against thee. In every arduous enterprise, remember the Lord who is great and terrible, and whose ways are higher than our ways. as the heavens are high above the earth. If God be for us, who can be against us ? And we may

boldly say—"the Lord is my helper and I will not fear what man can do unto me."

TUESDAY.

MORNING MEDITATION.

"ONCE more, my soul, the rising day salutes thy waking eyes!" Remember thou art professedly on thy journey Zion-ward, and thou hast many difficulties to encounter, therefore gird up the loins of thy mind, be sober and hope to the end. Venture not forward without first putting on the whole armour of God. For, although thou mayest at setting out, apprehend no danger, yet, ere thou hast travelled many paces, thou mayest be assailed and overcome by some of thy deadly foes. O my soul, let a deep sense of eternal things be wrought upon thy heart this day, and forget not for a single moment, thy weakness and entire dependance on the aid and direction of thy spiritual guide, the blessed Comforter: beware of grieving this heavenly messenger, for without his aid, thou canst do nothing. Cherish by all possible means his soul-cheering presence, and be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long. Pray without ceasing. Let the desires of thy soul be incessant for quickening and sanctifying grace. Seek "to be spiritually minded, which is life and peace." "And the peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall keep thy heart and mind through Christ Jesus."

I have just been reading the Memoirs of Mrs. Harriet Newell, the wife of a missionary to the heathen, and it has been to me "as cold waters to a thirsty soul." Truly, "To those who have no might (of their own) the Lord increaseth strength."

O that my languid, stupid affections were awakened to a more vigorous exercise, and unalterably fixed on the precious Redeemer. Surely I can say with the most heart-felt sincerity—

“ Dear Saviour, let thy beauties be
My soul's eternal food,
And grace command my heart away
From all created good.”

Why, why my soul, dost thou grovel here in the dust, fond of these earthly toys—O why is my heart so far from thee my God, my chief delight? When shall the day break and the shadows flee away, and my soul be comforted with the light of thy countenance.

“ When shall the time, dear Jesus, when,
The shining day appear,
That I shall leave these clouds of sin,
And guilt and darkness here.”

Surely at times my soul thirsteth for God, for the living God, so that I can say, whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth I desire besides thee. But how often do I mourn an absent God, and yet alas ! a careless heart. O for a closer walk with God ! O for a heart to love, serve, and honour the adorable Jesus, and live to him alone.

TUESDAY.

EVENING MEDITATION.

AND now another day is gone—“gone with the years beyond the flood.” Irrecoverably gone, I

had well nigh said, irrecoverably lost. Is it so, as the poet has said, "Time is Eternity: Pregnant with all eternity can give." "Who murders time, he crushes in the birth, a power ethereal, only not ador'd." Alas ! how poor, how low an estimate do we make of precious time ! How many are only or chiefly concerned to have it spent without consideration, without reflection, and to say the least, without profit or advantage to themselves or others ! Is it my soul otherwise with thee. Alas ! alas ! when for the time thou mightest have been a teacher, how little improvement hast thou made in spiritual concerns ? Truly mayest thou say, "much of my time has run to waste !" O to be enabled now to begin to redeem the time and to give all diligence to make my calling and election sure !—O let the time past suffice to have lived at a distance from thee ! from thee my chiefest joy ! from thee my dearest Saviour ! from thee, the beloved of my soul. "My soul that flies to thee, blessed Jesus, her trust, her treasure, as misers to their gold, while others rest." In the language of my beloved Erskine, I can say,

"Let fools a heaven of shades pursue,
But I for substance am :
The heaven I seek, is likeness to,
And vision of the Lamb."

What a treasure is the Holy Scriptures ! Truly, as says the poet, "this is the field where hidden lies, the pearl of price unknown !" And yet, alas ! how is this precious book, this word of life neglected ! If every house in this city were examined every day, how many neglected, perhaps dusty Bibles, would be found ! What care is manifested in dusting furniture and brushing away cobwebs, &c.—but how many Marthas are there who

are careful and troubled about many things, but are not sufficiently attentive to the one thing needful ! How is it that this precious Bible is so little resorted to—so little prized ? Who can say practically and from well known experience, with the pious Newton—

“ Precious Bible ! what a treasure
Does the word of God afford !
All I want for life and pleasure,
Food and medicine, shield and sword.”

O my soul, why is this Book so little resorted to by thee ? Thou hast found in it a healing balm for every wound, a cordial for thy fears ; and yet how little dost thou improve it to thy growth and peace !

WEDNESDAY.

MORNING MEDITATION.

“ PRAYER is an offering up of our desires unto God for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies.” O my soul, how important is this duty ! How precious is this privilege ! Three things are recommended in Scripture respecting this duty. 1. *Frequency*—“ Praying always with all prayer and supplication.” “ Pray without ceasing.” “ Men ought always to pray and not to faint.” 2. *Fervency*—“ Fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.” “ God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” 3. *Importunity*—“ I will not let thee go except thou bless me.” “ I will

avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them. I tell you that he will avenge them speedily." How great a blessing is it to be spiritually minded—to be in the fear of the Lord all the day long. O how inestimable the privilege to have the heart always ready to cry to him who is invisible, to be as it were within speaking distance of our heavenly Father. Surely then we need not fear though an host should encamp against us; for, "If God be for us who can be against us?" The Holy Spirit it is who teaches the believer this divine art. How careful then should he be not to grieve this heavenly Comforter. O my soul grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby thou art sealed unto the day of redemption. The apostle to the Ephesians says, "After that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise which is the earnest of our inheritance." O blessed earnest of good things to come! Again, to the Galatians, he gives the same pleasing idea: "And because ye are sons of God, he hath sent forth the spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba Father." This is further illustrated in a variety of passages in the sacred scriptures. No wonder those who have tasted that God is gracious, long for more frequent manifestations of his love. But wonderful indeed it is that such should ever turn to the muddy streams of worldly pleasure, or be tempted for a moment to forget God, and whenever they do forget him, what wonder is it that we hear such a piteous outcry of "O wretched man that I am"—"wretch that I am to wander thus, &c. &c.?" But again, wonder of wonders that after such instances of base ingratitude, the poor self-condemned, imprisoned believer should have his prison doors opened, and be again loosed from his

bonds; he taken from the horrible pit and the miry clay; his feet set upon a rock, a new song of praise to God put into his mouth, and his goings established. Truly this is the Lord's doing; and it is marvellous in our eyes. O to grace how great a debtor! "As the heavens are high above the earth, so are thy ways, O Lord, higher than our ways, and thy thoughts, than our thoughts."

WEDNESDAY.

EVENING MEDITATION.

"AND Isaac went out to meditate in the field, at the even tide, and he lifted up his eyes and saw, and behold the camels were coming." Of all the privileges the christian enjoys, there is none that would compensate for the want of meditation.— This, when the soul is in a healthful state, affords a continual feast; and how many instances do we find of the joyful experience of believers at such times. That eminent servant of God and of the church, Mr. Flavel, whose writings are a legacy which will be prized as long as there is a believer upon earth to read them, upon one occasion when he was setting out upon a journey on horse-back, and alone, determined to avail himself of that day's solitude, to meditate on the wonders of redeeming love, and it pleased his heavenly Father to indulge this his beloved child with sweet nearness to, and communion with him, insomuch that his intense desires had like to have overcome feeble nature, and burst the poor clay-tabernacle. He was for some time insensible to all terrestrial things, and when he awoke, as it were, from his heavenly meditations, he found himself and his horse besmeared

with blood, which had been forced from his nose. This he ever afterwards reckoned one of the days of the Son of man in an especial manner. But the time would fail me to tell of Edwards, and of Brainerd, of Watts, and of Doddridge, and the long list of worthies, who through faith and patience have already inherited the promises. O to have a heart to relish the sweet savour of piety they have left behind. O my soul be stirred up to follow them as they have followed Christ. Most cordially do I agree with Dr. Young in reprobating the idea of calling it solitude "to be alone." Hast thou not, my soul, spent the sweetest, the happiest, and most joyful hours of thy life, when no human eye was witness to thy converse—no ear to thy complaint,

"Nor sought a witness to thy song.
Nor wish'd for human praise."

O my soul, why art thou so little engaged! so seldom employed in this delightful exercise of communing with God. O for the inestimable privilege of leaning on Jesus' breast and telling him all my cares and sorrows!

"Our sorrows and our tears we pour
Into the bosom of our God,
He hears us in the mournful hour,
And helps us bear the heavy load."

Yes, my soul, thou canst witness that "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it and are safe." Did not our heart burn within us (said the two disciples who were going to Emmæus when Jesus met with them) while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures. O how refreshing to

the poor, weary, disconsolate christian, when Jesus, by the agency of the Holy Spirit, condescends to give some manifestation of his presence, and causes the broken bones to rejoice.

“When but in drops here by the way,
Free love distils itself,
I pour contempt on hills of prey
And heaps of worldly pelf.”

THURSDAY.

MORNING MEDITATION.

“SEARCH the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me.” These are the words of the blessed Jesus, who spake as never man spake.—O my soul, how precious is the Bible! “How pure is every page.” How is it suited to nourish and refresh the poor, weary, war-worn pilgrim in his journey Zion-ward—O let these precious truths be bound to my heart, and never on any account be lost sight of for a moment. O that they may be my guide and my directory through all the obliquities and changes of life.

How true have I found that declaration of scripture, which states that a man's life (or happiness) consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. No, the apostle could speak, and so can I, of “*having nothing and yet possessing all things.*” The Lord is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in him:—rejoice in the Lord alway, saith the apostle, and again I say rejoice.—O how sweet is a crumb of bread and a cup of water mixed with heart-felt gratitude and love to God.

I write this under circumstances which enable me to speak what I do know, and testify what I have felt. And on the contrary, as says the pious Watts,

“ Let a broad stream of golden sands
Through all his meadows roll,
He's but a wretch, with all his lands,
That wears a narrow soul.”

When I see some very rich men passing by, who are ignorant of God, and enemies to him, I say how pitiable is their case, and how much indebted am I to the riches of divine grace—

“ Shall I envy, then, the Miser
Doting on his golden store ?
Sure I am, or should be, wiser,
I am rich, 'tis he is poor.
Jesus gives me in his word,
Food and med'cine, shield and sword.”

But, alas ! my unstable, wandering heart, how often dost thou rove and lose the enjoyment of divine things ! Yes, well mayest thou say, “ Wretch that I am to wander thus.” Truly, “ My soul that *now* in Goshen dwells, *anon* in Egypt mourns.” But my mourning I feel to be on account of sin, and it makes me the more long to be freed from it.

“ I long to share the happiness,
Of that triumphant throng,
That swim in seas of boundless bliss,
Eternity along.”

The rest that remains for the people of God ! where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest. O how desirable !—but let me with faith and patience wait for it. How is it with those who have no weariness or painful struggling

in their course Zion-ward? Can any enjoy rest but the weary?

THURSDAY.

EVENING MEDITATION.

“TAKE heed how ye hear.” This admonition is peculiarly applicable, my soul, to thee. Thou oughtest to give more heed to the things which are spoken, lest at any time thou shouldst let them slip.—How many of the great and leading truths of the gospel hast thou heard faithfully explained, and yet how little hast thou retained or improved!—How important is the ministerial office, as Mr. Newton has correctly stated—

“No post on earth affords a place
For equal honour or disgrace.”

Alas! how few, even among the faithful, appear suitably impressed with the great responsibility they are under. They have, as it were, the gospel treasure put into their hands for gratuitous distribution: “We have this treasure,” saith the apostle, “in earthen vessels,”—“It hath pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe.” These things considered, how solemn, how diligent—how fervent—and how prayerful ought ministers to be! O how painful is it to see the light and trifling conduct of many: they have more of the stage than the pulpit in their exterior! and it is to be feared, more of the fleece than the flock in their hearts! “By their fruits ye shall know them.” “Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits.” “After my departure,” saith the apostle, “shall grievous wolves enter in among

you, not sparing the flock.” O that the Lord of the harvest would send forth faithful labourers into his harvest,—men fearing God and hating covetousness: Men who have been taught by the Holy Spirit the way of salvation themselves.—“The husbandman that laboureth must first be partaker of the fruit.” As well might a blind man teach the art of penmanship, as an unconverted minister the way of salvation through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ: consequently, “if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch. “The great misfortune in this case is, that some men learn christian experience by rote, and through the exceeding deceitfulness and depravity of the heart, they, after a time, claim that which is no other than stolen goods, as their own property, although they neither know what they say nor whereof they affirm: and the worst of it is, that such having climbed over the wall themselves, are not backward (if self-interest require it) to encourage others to enter the sheep-fold in the same manner.

That faithful and successful messenger of Christ, Mr. Flavel, says, “This office is to be committed unto faithful and able men, not to novices. I know the necessities of the churches are great, but no more haste, I beseech you, to supply their wants, than good speed: that’s soon enough, that’s well enough. ’Tis less hazard to put an ignorant rustick into an apothecary’s shop to compound and prepare medicines for men’s bodies, than to trust a man destitute both of faithfulness and prudence, with the dispensation of Christ’s ordinances to men’s souls.” *See Flavel’s Sermon on the Character of an Evangelical Pastor.* O that this sermon were printed on the inside walls of every minister’s study, and its salutary lessons deeply impressed on every heart.

FRIDAY.

MORNING MEDITATION.

READ, my soul, with delight and astonishment, TRUE RELIGION epitomized, in the 13th chapter of Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians, under the appropriate appellation of CHARITY. This divine principle, as delineated by the apostle, runs directly counter to all the false and selfish views of formal and vain professors; and were it possible for the carnal mind to attend to the dictates of truth, and the evidence of a vain and fallacious hope, without the aid of the Holy Spirit, this chapter would of itself be sufficient to convince the most secure formalist that he has neither part nor lot in this matter. Let me indulge a few moments in looking into this matter: "Charity suffereth long and is kind—envieth not—seeketh not her own—rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth." But why select where all is incomparably excellent? It will be seen at first view, that the principle which produces the above heavenly fruit, must itself be divine. Is any thing like this to be found in depraved man in his natural estate? *Charity envieth not.* Where is the man whose heart has not been changed by the grace of God, who is not conscious of envy? Let but his own selfish views, and his *religious* attainments, if you please, be obscured by the superior splendor of others, and he will hear this serpent hiss. But it would be a vain attempt to elucidate what is as clear to every intelligent mind, as that the sun warms and invigorates the earth. Enquire then, O my soul, whether thou hast any knowledge of, or acquaintance with this heaven-born principle. Hast thou ever felt the constraining influence of this love to God, and love

to men. Has this at any time, like the rod of Moses in another case, swallowed up all selfish considerations, and brought thee to rejoice in God and the word of his grace, saying "Not my will, not my interest, not my honour, but thine be done and promoted?"

"This is the grace that lives and sings,
When faith and hope shall cease,
'Tis this shall strike our joyful strings
In the sweet realms of bliss."

How great an enemy to God and the plan of salvation, is that great idol *self-love*! If any man will come after me, saith the dear Redeemer, let him *deny himself*. And throughout the whole of the New Testament, this principle of self-love is represented as altogether incompatible with love to the Lord Jesus Christ. And does not this perfectly accord with christian experience? "Self in myself I hate," saith one. O how would the christian rejoice to be entirely freed from the workings of this insidious foe. How often does this enemy of all righteousness obtrude itself when the poor soul would have wished to give all its affections to the dear Saviour.—How often, my soul, hast thou adopted the language of the poet,

"But unbelief, self-will, self-righteousness, and pride,
How often do they steal my weapon from my side."

FRIDAY.

EVENING MEDITATION.

THE apostle in his 12th chapter to the Hebrews has these encouraging words, "For ye are not

K

come unto the mount that might be touched &c. (that is Mount Sinai) but ye are come unto Mount Sion, &c. &c." This coming must have been by faith, agreeably to the explanation given in the former chapter, as they to whom he writes had not yet come in any other way, "To the spirits of just men made perfect." How important then, is this precious grace of faith to poor, weary pilgrims, who are seeking "*a better country*?"—"Charity endureth all things." And faith strengthens this divine principle of love by presenting to its view the glorious realities of the invisible world "Ye are come (saith the apostle,) to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant; and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel." Blessed and happy indeed are they who have thus come. What sayest thou my soul, hast thou any acquaintance with these things—with this coming? Surely if thou hast ever been conversant with such things, thou wilt have a perfect recollection of them. "Didst ever thou thy pardon read in tears of "untold joy?" O, didst thou ever cast thy heavy burden on the Lord Jesus and find rest for thy weary soul, and yet thou canst remember nothing of it? *Impossible!* But again: Hast thou not had frequent occasions of coming to this blood of sprinkling, since the commencement of thy pilgrimage, and dost thou not find it still essential to thy peace and growth to come to this precious fountain continually?—Is not this a balm for every wound, a cordial for thy fears? O my soul, never, never cease to come to this true Bethesda, (place of healing.) Here let all thy hopes centre; here let all thy wishes meet. How prone are men to anticipate future events, whether pleasing or painful; but, alas! how little dost thou, my soul, enjoy by anticipation, the soul ravishing delights of the heavenly state!

“ Here we shall see his face,
And never, never sin ;
Here, from the rivers of his grace,
Drink endless pleasures in.”

Moses chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season ; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt : for, he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.— That is, by faith he had such views, and such foretastes of heavenly things, that the splendors of an Egyptian court were all lost upon him. Nor was Moses in this respect different from other believers. All who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, would spurn at the offer of thrones and kingdoms, if with them they could not enjoy the soul-cheering prospect of their heavenly inheritance.

“ Could I command the spacious land,
And the more boundless sea,
For one blest hour at thy right hand,
I'd give them both away.”

SATURDAY.

MORNING MEDITATION.

“ REPENTANCE unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth with grief and hatred of his sin turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavours after new obedience !” True and evangelical repentance must of necessity, we think, imply a change of heart and of views. Can any unrenewed sinner, whose

heart is in love with sin, "with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of new obedience?" Mankind, by nature, have no suitable apprehensions of, or hatred to sin, as such. They may hate sin in some instances, in its effects or consequences. And it often happens that one man hates the sin which another loves and practices, and he in his turn, loves the sin which the other hates. Forgetfulness of God and our obligations to him, is not thought of by an unrenewed man or woman—nor is the great sin of unbelief and rejection of Christ Jesus, the only Saviour. Yet these things probably, form no small items in the catalogue of sins over which the believer weeps and mourns. As the answer taken from the catechism, and stated above, justly says, repentance is a saving grace—a saving work or operation of the Holy Spirit on the sinner's heart; but as it respects the duty to be performed on the part of the renewed sinner it is a constant and unceasing work. Having his soul enlightened to discover the glory and excellency of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the extent and purity of the divine law; and seeing and feeling, as he does, a body of sin and death still working within, together with the numberless temptations that beset him from without, he can never be at a loss for suitable grounds of repentance. Penitential sorrow, instead of being dreaded and avoided by the christian, is cultivated and sought after. He finds it better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting. How greatly are the men of the world deceived respecting christian experience! They think, to mourn and weep on account of sin, is intolerable, and to be dreaded as the greatest evil; whereas it is the believer's great grief that he feels so little of these appropriate exercises. It is his constant prayer to God that he would soften and melt his hard heart into penitential

sorrow. A hard and unfeeling heart is the constant subject of his complaint. To be freed from sin and to be made holy: to enjoy the presence of God, and hunger and thirst after righteousness, constitute his principal object of desire and pursuit. What sayest thou, my soul, does repentance constitute thy daily employment? or is it only a transient thing occasioned by some selfish consideration? Dost thou rejoice to feel its salutary effects, as well-becoming so great a delinquent as thou art?

“When of his absence we complain,
And mourn and weep in all we do,
There’s a strange pleasure in the pain,
And tears have their own sweetness too.”

SATURDAY.

EVENING MEDITATION.

“IN every thing give thanks: For this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” Ingratitude, among men, is considered as an evidence of the deepest depravity, and marked with a correspondent indignity and contempt; but as to the gratitude we owe to our creator, preserver, and kind benefactor, it seems to be entirely overlooked and forgotten by the generality of mankind.—The prophet viewing this matter in relation to the Jews, draws a contrast between them and the brute creation, greatly in favour of the latter: “The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib, but Israel doth not know, my people do not consider.” Although we consider gratitude as being distinct from love, yet where the same object has an equal claim to both, it is not always necessary to separate

or divide them.—God is love: Jesus Christ is altogether lovely: The Holy Ghost is the fountain of every blessing and the source of all pure and holy affections: justly then, is God entitled to all our love and to all our gratitude. He claims our undivided hearts, not only by right, but by conquest and by purchase.—We are not our own: for, we were bought with a price. We were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ.” Thanksgiving for mercies countless as the sand is a reasonable service, but alas! it is a much neglected service. Even among christians who have been healed of the leprosy of sin, how few return to give glory to God in any degree proportioned to the benefits received. Alas! my soul, how very defective art thou in the performance of this duty! How stupid and insensible under the receipt of mercies innumerable!—When shall it once be, that I shall feel a disposition to render to my God according to benefits received! O for grace this heart to soften! O for a constant, habitual, and impressive sense of obligation to the God of all my mercies! of my salvation!

This evening, my soul, is the preparation, and the sabbath is drawing on. Thou art now about to close another week and enter upon another sabbath. Dost thou rejoice in the prospect of spending another day in the service of thy God? or does it rather afford a gloomy and dreary prospect, as most unquestionably it does to multitudes? Canst thou say with truth, and from well-known experience, that “a day spent in the service of God is better than a thousand?” “Better is it to be a door-keeper in the house of God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.”

‘There’s nothing round this spacious earth,
That suits my vast desires:

To more refin'd and solid mirth
My boundless thought aspires :
In hope to sing without a sob,
The anthem ever new,
I'd gladly bid the dusty globe,
And vain delights, adieu."

ON

FORGIVENESS OF ENEMIES.

“If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink.” “If any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.” We are taught to pray after this manner, “Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.” From the foregoing divine precepts, no one, who professes a belief of the truth, will deny that forgiveness of injuries is a plain, important, and positive duty. In other passages we are taught, that a revengeful disposition is directly contrary to the letter and spirit of the gospel. We should cultivate and cherish a spirit of benevolence and goodwill towards all; and agreeably to the apostolic injunction, “If it be possible, and as much as lieth in us, live peaceably with all men,” “Not rendering evil for evil, &c.”

But it has been inquired, may not cases occur wherein persons may be justified, in full consistency with the christian temper and character, in withdrawing from the society and fellowship of persons of whose characters they had formed an erroneous opinion, and of whose temper and disposition they are, on gospel principles, constrained to disapprove, and yet not be chargeable with a breach of charity or violation of duty? We answer in the affirmative. —Suppose I should have formed an acquaintance with a man whose governing passion is anger, the scriptures instruct me to “make no friendship with an angry man:” and the reason is given, “lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul.”

But there is another reason, which, on christian principles, will justify me in declining any further intercourse with this man; viz. we cannot walk together, because we are not agreed;—there must be union in order to communion.

Suppose a person to possess many valuable gifts, and to stand high in point of office and responsibility—I respect his office, and I revere his character while imperfectly known; but on a more intimate acquaintance, I find him governed by selfish motives, and insensible to the peace and happiness of society, having only his own interest in view, and disregarding every consideration at variance therewith: am I bound by my former respect for such a character, to esteem him as what I supposed, or as what I find him to be? The answer is obvious.—The conduct to be pursued in this case is clearly pointed out by the apostle, (Romans xvi. 17,) “Now, I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and *avoid them.*” Christian liberty is clearly distinguishable, and every where recognised throughout the New Testament.—It teaches us to beware of men—to try the spirits, and not believe every spirit; and this in perfect consistency with the exercise of that charity which “hopeth all things and thinketh no evil.” While it affords matter of regret, to be obliged from undoubted evidence to change the favourable opinion we had formed of any person, we certainly cannot be considered as in bondage in such a case. We may still exercise a benevolent disposition toward those who have in some way or other constrained us to withdraw from their society, as no longer tending to edification; and if we have discovered the evil tendency of their constitutional or acquired habits, it is our duty to prevent by every prudent means, a recurrence of such

things as have sprung from this root of bitterness and troubled many. Our Saviour has pronounced a wo upon the world because of offences, and especially upon those through or by whom offences come; and the apostle exhorts the Corinthians to give none offence to the Jews nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God. Offences are of two kinds in a moral sense, *viz.* active and passive.—The first is that which we give to others by our words or actions, and the second that which we receive from the words or actions of others. How careful was the apostle Paul to avoid giving offence, lest his ministry should thereby be rendered useless, and how careful should all succeeding ministers of the gospel be in this particular, as the imprudent conduct of ministers often proves a stumbling block in the way of sinners, and grieves those who would, but cannot profit by their ministrations!

AN ADDRESS
ON THE
USEFULNESS AND IMPORTANCE
OF
BIBLE SOCIETIES,
AND THE
PRACTICAL INFLUENCE AND EXCELLENCE
OF THE
HOLY SCRIPTURES.

READ BEFORE THE BIBLE SOCIETY OF PHILADELPHIA,
May 3d, 1815,
BY THE AUTHOR.

AN ADDRESS, &c.



MR. PRESIDENT,

The happy tendency of Bible Societies is no longer a matter of doubt or uncertainty in the christian world.

Their rapid, and extensive growth, in Europe and America, and their benign and salutary effects, excite at once our wonder and our gratitude; and we are constrained to exclaim in the language of Scripture, "What hath God wrought?"

The interesting report which has just been read, affords conclusive evidence of the powerful influence of example in a good cause.

It is but a few years, since this Society was established, and stood alone in America. Now, we report the existence, and growing prosperity, of seventy-five sister institutions, all on the same liberal plan; and all zealously engaged in diffusing the Word of life.

We solicit, Sir, your indulgence while we make a few remarks on the usefulness and importance of Bible Societies, and the practical influence and excellence of the Holy Scriptures.

If a remedy could be found, suited to every disease, incident to the human frame, how valuable would it be considered? how highly would it be prized? and how generally would it be resorted to? But if this invaluable restorative could only be procured by those in affluence, how enviable would their situation be considered, as affording exclusively the means of securing the inestimable blessing of health.

In this case, let us suppose a society formed for the benevolent purpose of supplying the poor, and all who should feel themselves under the influence of disease. Who that had the power, would not rejoice in the privilege of becoming a member of this society; and seek with avidity, the gratification which would arise from administering this healing balm to the destitute and afflicted.? What such a remedy would be to the body, the Bible is to the soul. It points out "A sovereign balm for every wound," and through the liberality and benevolence of Bible Societies it is now ready to be distributed *to the poor*, "Without money and without price." Yes, to *the poor* this healing fountain is now open, and by this sovereign, this all-powerful remedy, not only the diseased, and the dying, even *the dead* are restored to health and vigour.

This is no hyperbole—no ideal or imaginary representation. It is *real*, and there are many who can testify to the fact from their own experience. The prediction has been fulfilled—the time has arrived "When the *dead* hear the voice of the Son of God (in his word) and hearing they live."

And how has this mighty work been accomplished? By what means have these wonderful effects been produced? We answer, by this *Sacred Book—by this Word of Life—by the Bible*.—And shall this inestimable book any longer be neglected or unknown? Forbid it every generous—every pious heart.

But it cannot be—the long predicted period has arrived—a new and glorious era has commenced, and "The knowledge of the Lord (as we fondly hope) is about to cover the earth as the waters cover the sea."

Behold! the innumerable hosts who have put their hands to this glorious work, who have come up to the "Help of the Lord—to the help of the

Lord against the mighty.” And let it be recorded on the hearts of all who rejoice in the prosperity of Zion, that in this glorious work of disseminating the Scriptures of truth, there is but one heart and one voice—not a discordant note—not a jarring sound. The universal chorus seems to be

“ Let party names no more
The christian world o’erspread.”

This effect, singly and alone, produced and cherished as it has been, by Bible Societies, affords more cause of joy and rejoicing to every pious and benevolent heart, than all the narrow and selfish advantages ever obtained by a sectarian spirit.

What a source of pleasing reflection does it afford, to see this spirit of union and harmony prevail among the followers of the Redeemer. Well may we say, in the words of the pious Psalmist—“ Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity—it is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron’s beard, that went down to the skirts of his garments—as the dew of Hermon and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion.”

To those, Sir, who have had the honour of sharing with you, in the management of this institution, this sentiment must afford the most pleasing retrospect. The happy union and undisturbed harmony, with which our feeble efforts have been accompanied, have rendered the performance of duty a most pleasing work and labour of love; and greatly encourage us to hope, “that our labour has not been altogether in vain in the Lord.” When we view the spread of Missionary, of Bible, and of Tract Societies, have we not ground to hope, that the Lord is about to take to himself his great

power, and reign, king of nations, as he is king of saints.

In the united efforts of the pious of all denominations, to promote the great interests of the Redeemer's kingdom, do we not discover the harbinger of good things to come?

The angry and selfish passions, too long suffered to separate and divide those engaged in the same glorious cause, have vanished from our sight; and the benevolent and compassionate spirit of the gospel, appears to have taken their place. Surely, "this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes." "Let the people praise thee, O God, let all the people praise thee."

Do we not hear the appropriate and comforting language of the Prophet to the church, as it were, addressed to our ears, in these latter days—in these ends of the earth: "Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations.—Spare not, lengthen thy cords and strengthen thy stakes, for thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left, and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles and make the desolate cities to be inhabited." And the believer under the animating view of Zion's prosperity—the hope of greater blessings yet to come, and in the exercise of faith and holy zeal, is ready to respond with joyful acclamation in the words of the sacred penman—"Awake, awake, put on strength O arm of the Lord.—Awake as in the ancient days, in the generations of old.—Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab and wounded the Dragon? Art thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep, that hath made the depths of the sea a way for thy ransomed to pass over."

We will now briefly enumerate some of the peculiar advantages which the believer enjoys from the Holy Scriptures. And first, we say of this.

sacred volume generally, "As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood," so is the Bible in comparison of all other books. In the sacred scriptures we have the words of eternal life, and they are they which testify of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the world saith the blessed Saviour to his disciples, ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. His people have not been left comfortless—the spirit in the word has been to them as rivers of water in a dry place, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.—How often under the greatest trials and most severe conflicts have they been constrained to adopt the impressive language of the apostle—"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the father of mercies and the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all tribulations, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." Our light affliction, saith the same apostle, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Are the people of God brought into great straits and difficulties, such as effect their dearest interests—how consoling is the language and example of his servants of old, "It is the Lord (saith one, under a heavy affliction) let him do what seemeth him good." Of Aaron under a most severe trial it is recorded, "And Aaron held his peace." "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord," saith the patient and afflicted Job.

In the prophet Habbakuk we have these memorable words, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine—the labour of the olive shall fail and the fields shall yield no meat—the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and

there shall be no herd in the stall, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

How often has the trembling believer found the Bible a sure source of comfort in the time of trouble. It is then and then only, when all created streams are dry—when all earthly cisterns are empty, and broken, that the value of this most precious Book can in any suitable degree be realized. How unwisely then do those act, who neglect this sacred volume, and spend the whole of a busy life in building an airy superstructure of sublunary bliss; without foundation, and liable every moment to be swept away.

But contrast with this the man who derives his hope, his comfort and his support from the Bible—

"Let cares like a wild deluge come,
And storms of sorrow fall,"

His hopes and comforts are built on a solid rock—on a secure foundation. Let his earthly possessions—his health, or his friends, be taken away, still he can say with the poet—(while he retains his Bible)

"Let the world account me poor,
Having this I ask no more."

Another unspeakable source of consolation found in the Bible, is, that it points the weary and heavy laden to a place of rest. The believer while he sojourns here is in a state of continual conflict.

"A wicked world and wicked heart
With Satan now are joined,
Each acts a too successful part
In harrassing his mind."

Perhaps there are few sensations of the christian's heart, which he can more clearly and dis-

finetly recognize, than that of which we are now speaking. Although he may often be oppressed with doubts and fears, and unable to speak the language of assurance, yet he can say with the poet—

“ Does the gospel word proclaim
Rest for those who weary be,
Then, my soul, put in thy claim,
Sure that promise speaks to thee.
Marks of grace I cannot shew,
All polluted is my best,
Yet I weary am, I know,
And the weary long for rest.”

Experience has taught him, that he is not to look for, or expect a discharge from this warfare here below ; yet he is cheered and comforted under his various trials, in the happy prospect which is opened to his view in the holy scriptures—there he reads, “ There remaineth a rest for the people of God.” “ Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth—yea saith the spirit, that they may rest from their labours.” “ There the wicked cease from troubling, there the weary are at rest.”

How welcome to the weary, war-worn christian, the cheering prospect of the accomplishment of all his wishes, in an exemption from sin, from toil and danger ; and in the secure possession and enjoyment of those things which God hath prepared for them that love him—such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man. How animating the triumphant language of the apostle—“ I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith—henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”

Again, we notice the inestimable worth of this precious Book, on a dying bed. This is a situation which may be said with truth, to try men's souls, and happy the man who can then adopt the language of the Psalmist, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for thou art with me—thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." That sacred word on which the believer has fixed his hope, he now finds as an anchor to the soul both sure and stedfast; and on this foundation he can quietly rest, even when heart and flesh faint and fail; and the bright prospect which is sometimes presented to the view of the dying believer, enables him to say,

"Jesus can make a dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows are."

On the subject of pecuniary aid to this Society, little need be said. It is known that money is necessary and that money is now wanted. Let those therefore, who have the means, and the disposition to contribute, give as the Lord hath prospered them—not grudgingly, or of necessity, "for the Lord loveth the cheerful giver." There are those, (and we trust many such present) who can from their own experience, testify to the truth of that divine aphorism recorded by the apostle, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Nor is the pleasure of relieving the wants of others, the only reward of charity and benevolence. The Scriptures assure us that, "The liberal soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth shall be watered also himself."

What an endearing relation does our gracious Saviour recognize as subsisting between himself and the meanest of his followers: "Inasmuch (saith he) as ye have done it unto one of the least

of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”—And again, “Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones, *a cup of cold water only*, in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.”

If our gracious Saviour has promised to notice and to reward the gift of charity, although in a cup of cold water only, may we not fondly hope, he will accept with complacency the gratuitous offering of the Word of Life.

But few of us have been called to the honourable, the arduous office of preaching the gospel.—But let us rejoice that we have the opportunity of being as it were, pioneers in this blessed work of spreading the Sacred Scriptures.

The object to which the contributions of this evening will be appropriated deserves particular notice. It is to procure stereotype plates, with a large sized type for the use of the aged and infirm. How much this will add to the comforts and convenience of thousands who make the Bible the man of their counsel must be obvious to all.

Let those then, who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, and those who believe the Bible contains the words of eternal life, let all such, now remember the poor, the aged, and such as are either destitute of the Bible—or through infirmity, unable to read the small type, and practically say, “of thine own Lord, have we given thee:” For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

ADVERTISEMENT.

AT the time when proposals for publishing Mr. Haslett's posthumous papers, were issued, and until after several Forms were printed, it was supposed that the manuscripts would make upwards of two hundred pages. But the printer who made the calculations was mistaken.— Mistakes, however, do not exonerate from the duty of fulfilling the promises of the proposals. The Extracts from Mr. Haslett's favourite author, are, therefore, added. "*The Touchstone of Sincerity*," written by the REV. JOHN FLAVEL, has, for about one hundred and sixty years, been high in the esteem of the churches.

EXTRACTS FROM
THE
TOUCHSTONE
OF
SINCERITY :
OR,
THE SIGNS OF GRACE,
AND
SYMPTOMS OF HYPOCRISY.

BY JOHN FLAVEL.

EXTRACT

FROM MR. FLAVEL'S EPISTLE TO THE READER.

“ READER,

The time will come when they that scoff at the serious diligence of the saints, and break many a pleasant jest upon the most solemn and awful things in religion, will tremble when they shall hear the midnight cry, *Behold the bridegroom cometh!* and see the lamps of all vain and formal professors expire, and none admitted into the marriage but such whose lamps are furnished with oil; that is, such whose professions and duties are enlivened and maintained, by vital springs and principles of real grace within them.

The design of this *Manual* is to bring every man's gold to the touchstone and fire; I mean every man's grace to the trial of the word; that thereby we may know what we are, what we have, and what we must expect and trust to, at the Lord's coming. I pretend not to any gift of *discerning spirits*. But the ordinary aids and assistances of the Spirit are with us still, and the lively Oracles are among us still. To them we may freely go to resolve all doubts, and decide perplexed cases. And thus we may discern our own spirits, though we want the extraordinary gift of discerning other men's spirits.

I have little to say of this treatise in thy hands, more than that it is well aimed and designed, however it be managed.

It is not the pleasing, but profiting of a man, that I have herein laboured for. I know of nothing in it, that is like to wound the upright, or slightly lead

the hypocrite, by crying peace, *Peace, peace, when there is no peace.* The Scripture hath been my guide; by its light, I have followed in search of hypocrisy through the labyrinths of the heart.—Some assistance I hope I have had also from experience; for scripture and experience are such relatives, and the tie betwixt them so discernible, that nothing in nature can be more so. What we feel in our hearts, we might have read in the scriptures before ever we felt it.

That the blessing of God may go forth with it, and accompany it to thy soul, reader, is the heart's desire and prayer of,

Thine and the Church's

Servant in Christ.

JOHN FLAVEL."

THE
TOUCHSTONE OF SINCERITY:

OR, THE SIGNS OF GRACE, AND SYMPTOMS OF HYPOCRISY.

Because thou sayest I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable, and poor and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me Gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see. Revelations iii. 17, 18.

CHAP. I.

COLD is the complexion and natural temper of those that are wholly alienated and estranged from Christ and religion. *Hot*, is the gracious temper of those that know and love Jesus Christ in an excellent degree. *Lukewarm*, or *Tepid*, is the temper of those who have too much religion to be esteemed carnal, and too little to be truly spiritual; a generation that is too *Politick* to venture much, and yet so *foolish* as to lose all. They are loath to forsake truth *wholly*, and more loath to follow it too *closely*. The form of religion they affect as an *honour*, the power of it they judge a *burden*.

This is that temper which the Lord hates; and this was the disease of *Laodicea*, which Christ, the great and only *Heart-Anatomist* and *Soul-Physician*, discovers in *verse 17*, and prescribes a cure

for in *verse 18.* So that the words resolve themselves into two parts; *viz.*

I. *A faithful discovery*; II. *a proper remedy of the disease of Laodicea.*

I. Their disease is faithfully discovered to them, in its *symptoms, cause, and aggravations.*

First, Its Symptoms; an unconcerned, indifferent, regardless spirit in matters of religion, neither hot nor cold; the true temper of *formal-professors*, who never engaged themselves thoroughly and heartily in the ways of God, but can take or leave, as times govern, and wordly interest comes to be concerned.

Secondly, Its cause and root; which is the defect and want of the truth, and power of inward grace, noted in these expressions, *Thou art wretched and miserable, poor, blind, and naked*; that is, thou art destitute of a *real* principle a *solid* work of grace. These five epithets do all point at one and the same thing; namely, the defectiveness and rottenness of their foundation. The two first, *wretched and miserable*, are more general, concluding them in a sad condition, a very sinful and lamentable estate. The three last, *poor, blind and naked*, are more particular; pointing at those grand defects and flaws in the foundation, which made their condition so wretched and miserable.

1. *Poor*; that is, *void of righteousness and true holiness before God.* These are the true riches of Christians, and whoever wants them, is poor and miserable, how rich soever he be in gifts of the mind, or treasures of the earth.

2. *Blind*; that is *without spiritual illumination*, and so neither knowing their disease nor their remedy; the evil of sin, or necessity of Christ.

3. *Naked*; *without Christ, and his righteousness.* Sin is the soul's shame and nakedness; "Christ's pure and perfect righteousness is its co-

vering or garment." This they wanted, how richly soever their bodies were adorned. These were *Laodiceans*; that is, a just, or righteous people (according to the meaning of that word) whose garments with which they covered themselves, were made of the home-spun thread of their own righteousness.

Thirdly, The disease of *Laodicea* is here opened to them in its *aggravations*. '*Thou saidst I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; but knowest not,*' &c.

To be really graceless and Christless is a miserable condition: but to be so, and yet confidently persuaded of the contrary, is most miserable. To have the very symptoms of death upon us, and yet tell those that pity us, we are as well as they, is lamentable indeed!

O the efficacy of a spiritual delusion! Their disease was gracelessness, and the aggravation of it, was their senselessness.

II. We have a proper remedy prescribed, verse 18. *I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, &c.* In which we have to consider, First, what is prescribed for the cure. Secondly, where it is to be had. Thirdly, how to be obtained.

First, What are the remedies prescribed? They are three—gold, white raiment, and eye-salve.—First, *gold*, the cure of poverty, yea, gold tried in the fire; that is, grace that hath been variously proved already. And the more it is proved, the more its truth will be conspicuous, The next is *white raiment*, the remedy against nakedness.—And, lastly, *eye-salve*; the effectual cure of blindness. Under all these choice metaphors more choice and excellent things are shadowed, even spiritual graces: real holiness, more precious than gold; Christ's imputed righteousness, the richest

garment in all the wardrobe of heaven; and spiritual illumination, the most excellent eye-salve that ever was, or can be applied to the mental eye, or understanding of man in this world.

Secondly, Where may these precious remedies be had? Christ hath the monopoly of them all.—*Buy of me*, saith Christ in the text. He is the *repository* of all graces. Angels, ministers, ordinances cannot furnish you with them, without Christ.

Thirdly, How may they be obtained from him? *Buy of me*. But what have they, that are poor, wretched, miserable, and *want all things*, to give as price, or by way of merit, for those inestimable treasures of grace? *Buying* in this place, can signify or intend no more than the acquisition, compassing, or obtaining these things from Jesus Christ, in the use of such means and methods as he hath appointed. In the use of them we merit grace no more than the patient merits of his physician by coming to him, and carefully following his prescriptions in the use of such medicines, as he freely gives him. And that place, *Isa. lv. 1*, from which this phrase seems to be borrowed, fully clears it. “He that hath no money, let him come and buy wine and milk without money and without price.”

From all which, these three observations fairly offer themselves to us.

Doct. 1. That many professors of religion are under very great and dangerous mistakes in their profession.

Doct. 2. That true grace is exceeding precious, and greatly enriches the soul that possesseth it.

Doct. 3. That only is to be accounted true grace, which is able to endure all those trials appointed, or permitted for the discovery of it.

The first doctrine naturally rises out of the scope of the text, which is to awaken and convince unsound professors.

The second, from the use the Holy Ghost makes of the best and choicest things in nature, to shadow forth the inestimable worth and preciousness of grace.

And the third, from that particular, and most significant metaphor of *gold tried in the fire*; by which I here understand a real and solid work of grace, evidencing itself to be so in all the proofs and trials that are made of it. For whatsoever is probational of grace, and puts its soundness and sincerity to the test, is that to it which fire is to gold. In this sense it is used in Scripture, Psalm lxvi. 10. *Thou hast tried us as silver is tried.* Also Zech. xiii. 9. *I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and try them as gold is tried.* So that whatsoever it is which examines and tries grace, whether it be sound and sincere, *that* is the fire Christ here speaks of; and such grace as abides these trials, is the *gold* here intended.

CHAP. II.

DOCT. I

That many professors of religion are under very great and dangerous mistakes in their professions.

SECT. I.

ALL flattery is dangerous, Self-flattery is more dangerous. Self-flattery in the business of salvation, is the most dangerous of all.

To pretend to the good we know we have not, is gross hypocrisy; to persuade ourselves of the good we have not, though we think we have it, is formal hypocrisy. This was the case of those self-deceivers in the text.

My design in this discourse is not to shake the well-built hopes of any man, or beget groundless jealousies; but to discover the real dangerous flaws in the foundation of many men's hopes of heaven. Every thing is as its foundation is, that failing, all fails.

There is a twofold self-suspicion or fear in God's own people. The one is a fear of *caution*, awaking the soul to the use of all preventive means for avoiding danger. This is *laudable*. The other a groundless suspicion of reigning hypocrisy, tending only to despondency. This is *culpable*. By the former the soul is guarded against *danger*; by the latter it is betrayed into needless trouble, and debarred from *peace*.

Good men have sometimes more fear than they ought, and wicked men have less than they ought. The former do sometimes shut their eyes against the fair evidences of their own graces; the latter shut their eyes against the sad evidences of their sin and misery. This is an evil in both, but not equally dangerous; for he that shuts his eyes against his own graces and privileges, loseth his peace and comfort but for a time, but he that shuts his eyes against the evidences of his sin and misery, loseth his precious soul to all eternity. Of this latter sort of *self-deceivers* the world is full, and these are the men I am concerned with in this point.

Oh, that some men had less trouble! And oh, that some had more! If the foolish virgins had been less confident, they had certainly been more *safe*, Matth. xxv. If those vain glorious professors in Matth. vii. 22, had not shut their eyes

against their own hypocrisy, Christ had not shut against them the door of salvation and glory. Ananias and Sapphira, Hymeneus, and Philetus, Alexander and Demas, with multitudes more of that sort, are the sad instances and proofs of this point. It is said, Prov. xxx. 12. *There is a generation that is pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness.* Through what false spectacles do the men of that generation look upon their own souls ! Too many men of that generation are still to be found.

Three things I shall here endeavour to do.

1. To give evidence beyond contradiction to this sad truth, that among professors are found many self-deceivers.

2. To assign the true causes and reasons why it is so.

3. Improve it, in those practical inferences the point affords.

SECT. II.

That there are multitudes of self-deceivers among professors, will appear,

1. By this ; That there are every where to be found more professors than converts ; unregenerate professors, whose religion is but the effect of education. Christianity, by the favour of an early providence, was the first comer ; it first bespoke them for itself. These are christians of an human creation, rather *born*, than *new-born*, believers. Now all these are self-deceived, and hasting to damnation, under the efficacy of a strong delusion ; *for if a man think himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself*, saith the apostle, Gal. vi. 3. Surely our birth-privilege, with-

out the new-birth, is nothing; yea, worse than nothing, as to our last and great account. That which stands for a great sum in *our arithmetic*, is nothing. It is but a *cypher* you see in *God's*.—*Except a man be born again* (say the lips of truth) *he cannot see the kingdom of God.* John iii. 3.

Poor self-deceivers ! ponder those words of Christ. You have, hitherto, thought your civil education, your dead and heartless duties, enough to denominate you christians before God. But go now, and learn what that scripture meaneth. Be assured you must experience another manner of conversion, or it is impossible for you to escape eternal damnation !

2. It is too manifest by this, that many professors are acquainted with only the externals of religion, and all their duties are no more than a compliance of the outward man with the commands of God. This is the superficial religion which deceives and betrays multitudes into eternal misery. True religion seats itself in the inward man, and acts effectually upon the vital powers, killing sin in the heart, and purging its designs and delights from carnality and selfishness; engaging the heart for God, and setting it as a bow in its full bent for him, in the approaches we make to him. But how little are many professors acquainted with these things !

Alas ! if this be all we have to stand upon, how dangerous a station is it ! What is external conformity, but an artificial *imitation* of that which lives only in the souls of good men ? Thus was Jehu deceived. He did many acts of external obedience to God's command; *but Jehu took no heed to walk in the way of the Lord God of Israel with his heart.* 2 Kings x. 31. And this was his overthrow.

This was also the ruin of those formalists, in Ezek. xxxiii 31. They came and sat before the Lord as his people. The word was to them as a lovely song; they were mightily charmed with the modulation of the prophet's voice, and his lively gestures; but all the while their hearts went after their covetousness. And what abundance of such Pharisaical, superficial religion is almost every where to be found!

3. It appears by this, *that every trial made by sufferings upon professors, blows away multitudes, like dry leaves in autumn by a stormy wind.* Many fall from their own steadfastness in shaking times. Prosperity multiplies vain professors; and adversity purges the church of them.—*Then shall many be offended.* Matth. xxiv. 10.

This the Scripture every where marks as a symptom of hypocrisy. *Psalms lxxviii. 8.* 'A generation that set not their hearts aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God,' 1 *John* ii. 19. 'But they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not of us.' *Matth.* xiii. 21. 'For when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.' But should one have told them in the days of their profession, that all their zeal and labor in religion would have ended in this, it is likely they would have replied as *Hazael* did to the man of God, 2 *Kings* viii. 13. 'But what, is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?'

O how unlike is their dark and dusky evening to their glorious and hopeful morning! These professors have more of the moon than of the sun; little light, less heat, but many changes. They deceive many, yea, they deceive themselves, but cannot deceive God. During the calm, what a flourish do they make! And with what gallantry do they sail! By and by you may hear horrible tempests, and

soon after you may see a dreadful shipwreck; and no wonder, for they wanted that ballast and establishment in themselves that (2. Pet. iii. 17.) would have kept them tight and stable.

4. It is too apparent by this, that many professors secretly indulge and shelter beloved lusts under the wings of their profession. This, like a worm at the root, will wither and kill them at last, how fragrant soever they may seem to be for a season. *Gideon* had seventy sons, and one bastard; but that one bastard was the death of all his seventy sons.

Some men have many excellent gifts, and perform multitudes of duties; but one secret sin indulged and allowed, will destroy them all at last. He that is partial as to the mortification of his sins, is undoubtedly hypocritical in his profession. If *David's* evidence was good for his integrity, such professors will never clear themselves of hypocrisy. 'I was also upright before him, and kept myself from mine iniquity,' saith he. *Psalms* xviii. 23. This is the right eye, and right hand which every sincere Christian must pluck out, and cut off. *Matth.* v. 29, 30.

This is a metaphor from Surgeons, whose manner it is, when the whole is in danger by any part, to cut it off, lest all perish.

Their suppressing some lusts, raises their confidence; the indulging of one, destroys the foundation of their hopes; and thus they deceive themselves.

This also manifests the self-deceits of many professors, that the secret duties of religion, or at least the secret intercourse of the soul with God in them, is a secret hid from their knowledge and experience.

To attend the ordinances of God in the seasons of them, they know; to pray in their families at the stated hours thereof, they know; but to retire

from all the world into their closets, and there to pour out their hearts before the Lord, they know not.

To feel somewhat within, paining them like an empty, hungry stomach, until they have eaten that hidden manna, that bread in secret; I mean refreshed their souls by real communion with the Lord there; this is a mystery locked up from the acquaintance of many that call themselves christians. Yet this is made a characteristical note of a sincere christian, by Christ himself, in Matthew vi. 6.

O reader! if thy heart were right with God, and thou didst not cheat thyself with a vain profession, thou wouldst have frequent business with God, which thou wouldst be loth thy dearest friend, or the wife of thy bosom, should be privy to. Religion doth not lay all open to the eyes of man.—*Observed duties* maintain our *credit*, but *secret duties* maintain our *life*. It was the saying of an heathen, about his secret correspondence with his friend, “Why need the world be acquainted with it? Thou and I are theatre enough to each other.” There are enclosed pleasures in religion, which none but renewed spiritual souls do feelingly understand.

6. *How many more profess religion, in these days, than ever made religion their business!* Philosophy tells us, there is a main-business, and a by-business; the same is found in religion also.

There are some that give themselves to the Lord, 2 Cor. viii. 5; whose conversation is in heaven, Phil. iii. 18; the end or scope of whose life is Christ, Heb. xiii, 7, 8; who give religion the precedency both in time and affection, Psalm v. 3. Rom. xii. 11; who are constant and indefatigable in the work of the Lord, 1 Cor. xv. 58.

There are some also that take up religion, rather for ostentation than for an occupation; who never mind the duties of religion, but when they have nothing else to do; and when their outward man is engaged in the duties of it, yet their heart is not in it. They hear, they pray; but their souls, their thoughts, and minds are abroad. It is not their business to have fellowship with God in duties; to get their lusts mortified; their hearts tried; their souls conformed to the image of God in holiness.

They pray as if they prayed not, and hear as if they heard not; and if they feel no power in ordinances, no quickening in duties, it is no disappointment at all to them. These were not their designs in drawing nigh to God, in these appointments.

Thus you see, what numbers of professors deceive themselves.

SECT. III.

If we seriously inquire into the grounds and causes, of this self-deceit among professors, we shall find these four things conspiring to delude and cheat them, in the great concern of their salvation.

1. The natural deceitfulness of the heart: than which nothing is more treacherous, and false.—Jer. xvii. 9. *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.* The heart is the greatest supplanter, the most crafty and subtle cheat of all. It defeats us of our heavenly heritage, as Jacob supplanted Esau in his earthly one, while we are *hunting* after earthly trifles. And wherein its deceitfulness principally appears, you may see by the solemn admonition of the apostle, James i. 22, in which he warns us to beware, that in hearing the word we deceive not ourselves by false reasonings, by making false syllogisms;—

whereby many misconclude about their spiritual and eternal estate and condition, and deceive themselves.

The time will come, when a man's own heart will be found to have the chief hand in his ruin ; and what *Apollodorus* did but fancy his heart said to him, some men's hearts will tell them in earnest, when they come to the place of misery and torment. "I have been the cause of all this, I have betrayed thee into all these torments. It was my laziness, my credulity, my averseness to the ways of strict godliness, mortification and self-denial, which have for ever undone thee. When thou satest under the convincing truths of the gospel, it was I, that whispered those atheistical surmises into thine ear, persuading thee that all thou heardst was but the intemperate heat of an hot-brained zealot. When the judgments of God were denounced, and the misery thou now feelest forewarned and threatened, I spake out, *I will believe it when I come thither.*"

Surely, this is a great truth, which was observed by the wisest of men. *He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool.* Proverbs xxviii. 25. And thousands of such fools are to be found among professors.

2. Satan is a chief conspirator in this treacherous design. *We are not ignorant* (saith the apostle) *of his devices* ; his sophistry and flights.—2 Cor. ii. 11.—his trains and methods of temptation, which are thoroughly studied, and artificially moulded and ordered. Nor is it to be wondered at, considering his vast knowledge, deep malice, and long experience in this art of cheating, together with the great corruption and proneness of the hearts of men, to close with his devices, and believe his impostures, that so vast a number of souls

are taken "Captive by him at his own will." Tim. ii. 26.

It is the God of this world, who blinds the minds of them that believe not. 2 Cor. iv. 2, 3, 4. *The god of this world*, (so called by a figure) who leads a world of poor, deluded wretches to destruction, having first *blinded their minds*, and with his hellish art practised upon their understanding, that leading and directive faculty, which is to the soul, what eyes are to the body.

3. The common works, found in unregenerate souls, deceive many, who cannot distinguish them from the special works of the spirit in God's elect. See that alarming scripture, Heb. vi. 4, where you find among the common operations of the Spirit upon apostates, that illumination, which gives perspicuity to their minds in discerning spiritual truths; and that, frequently, with more distinctness and depth of judgment, than some gracious souls attain unto. Besides, many rare and excellent gifts are here denoted, which are singularly useful to others, as they are exercised in expounding the Scriptures, defending the truths of Christ by solid arguments, preaching, praying, &c. and which make the subjects of them renowned and honoured in the church of God; whilst, in mean time, they are dazzled with their own splendour, and fatally ruined by them.

There you find also *tasting*, as well as *enlightening*: so that they seem to abound not only in knowledge, but in feeling also. That is, in some kind of *experience* of what they know; for experience is the bringing of things, to the test of spiritual sense. They do *taste* or experience, the *good* that comes by the *promises* of the word, and *discoveries* of heaven and glory, though they feel not experimentally the transforming efficacy of these things, upon their own souls.

And this *taste*, which comes so near to the experience, which the sanctified soul enjoys, seems to put their condition beyond all controversy, and lay a foundation for their ill-built confidence.— Nothing is more apt to beget and nourish such a confidence, than the meltings and workings of our affections about spiritual things. For, as a grave divine hath well observed, “Such a man seems to have all that is required of a christian, and to have attained the very end of all knowledge, which is operation and influence upon the affections.” When they shall find heat in their affections, as well as light in their minds, how apt are they to say (as these self-deceivers in the text did) they *are rich and have need of nothing!* Now of all the false signs of grace, by which men deceive themselves, none are so dangerous and destructive to souls, as those that come nearest true ones. Never doth Satan more effectually and securely manage his cheats, than when he is transformed into an angel of light.

Among this sort of self-deceivers, how many gifted men, and among that sort, some employed in the office of the ministry, will be found, whose daily employment being about spiritual things, studying, preaching, praying, &c. conclude themselves sanctified persons, because they are conversant about sacred employments, as if the subject must be sacred, because the object is. Oh! that such would seriously ponder these two scriptures! Matth. vii, 22 “Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?” And 1 Cor. ix. 27, “Lest that by any means, when I have preached unto others, I myself should be a cast-away.”

4. To add here no more—this strengthens self-deceit exceedingly in many, viz: their observations of, and comparing themselves with, others. Thus the Pharisees (those gross self-deceivers) trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others, Luke xviii. 9. Their low rating of others, gave them that high rate and value of themselves. And thus the proverb is made good—He that hath but one eye is a king among the blind.

Thus the false apostles cheated themselves; 2 Cor. x. 12. “But they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.” God hath not made one man a measure or standard to another man, but his word is the common beam, or scale to try all men.

These men are as sharp-sighted to note other men’s evils, as their own excellencies, to eye the miscarriages of others with derision, and their own performances with admiration.

They bless themselves when they behold the profane in their impieties. Luke xviii. 11. “God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican!” that is, O what a saint am I in comparison of these miscreants! The Pharisee’s religion, you see, runs all upon *nots*. A negative holiness is enough for him, and the measure he takes of it is, by comparison of himself with others, more externally vile than himself. A christian may say with praise and humility, *I am not as some men are*; but though he knows nothing by himself, yet is he not thereby justified, 1 Cor. iv. 4. He neither rakes together the enormities of the vilest, nor the infirmities of the holiest, to justify and applaud himself, as these self-deceivers do. And these are the causes and occasions of that general deception, under which so many of the professing world bow down and perish.

SECT. IV.

III. In the last place, I shall improve this point variously, according to the importance and usefulness of it, with as much brevity and closeness of application as I can.

Use 1. Shall be for caution to professors. Before I tell you what use you *should* make of it, I must tell you what use you may *not* make of it.

1. Do not make this use of it—to conclude from what hath been said, that all professors are but hypocrites, and that there is no truth nor integrity in any man. This is intolerable arrogance, to ascend the throne of God, and unparelled uncharitableness, to judge the hearts of all men.

Some men are as apt to conclude others to be hypocrites, by measuring their hearts by their own, as others are to conclude themselves saints, by comparing their own excellencies with other men's corruptions. But, blessed be God! there is some grain among the heap of chaff, some true diamonds among the counterfeit stones. The devil hath not the whole. A remnant belongs really to the Lord.

2. Do not make this use of it—that assurance must needs be impossible, because so many professors are found to be self-deceivers.

That assurance is one of the greatest difficulties in religion, is a great truth; but that it is therefore unattainable in this world, is very false. Popish doctrine indeed makes it impossible; but that doctrine is practically confuted in the comfortable experience of many souls. All are commanded to strive for it, 2 Pet. i. 10. "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure." And some have the happiness to obtain it. 2 Tim. i. 12. "For I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded

that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him, against that day.”

Let the similar works upon hypocrites resemble as much as they will, the saving works of the Spirit upon believers, yet God doth always, and the saints do sometimes, plainly discern the difference.

3. Do not make this use of it, to conceal or hide the truths or graces of God, or refuse to profess or confess them before men, because many professors deceive themselves and others also, by a vain profession.

Because another professeth what he hath not, must you therefore hide or deny what you have? It is true, the *possession* of grace and truth in your own souls, is that which saves you: but the profession and confession of it, is that which honours God, and edifies, yea, sometimes is the instrument to save others. It is your comfort that you feel it, it is others' comfort to know that you do so. Ostentation is a sin, but a serious and humble profession is a duty, Rom. x. 9.

SECT. V.

Use 2. HAVING shewed you in the former section, what use you ought not to make of this doctrine, I will next shew you what use you ought to make of it. Surely you cannot improve this point to a better purpose, than from it to take warning, and look to yourselves, that you be not of that number, who deceive themselves in their profession. If this be so, suffer me closely to press that great apostolical caution, 1 Cor. x. 12. “Let him that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall.” O professors! look carefully to your foundation, be not high-minded, but fear. You have, it may be, done and suffered many things in and for religion, you have excellent gifts and sweet comforts, a warm zeal for God, and high confidence of your

integrity. All this may be right (for aught I, or it may be, you know) but yet, it is possible, it may be false also. You have sometimes judged yourselves, and pronounced yourselves upright; but remember your final sentence is not yet pronounced by your judge. And what if God weigh you over again in his more equal balance, and should say "*Mene, Tekel*," thou art weighed in the balance, and found wanting. What a confounded man wilt thou be under such a sentence! "Things that are highly esteemed of men, are often an abomination in the sight of God." He seeth not as man seeth.

Thy heart may be false, and thou not know it—yea, it may be false, and thou strongly confident of its integrity.

The saints may approve thee, and God condemn thee, Rev. iii. 1. "Thou hast a name that thou livest, but thou art dead." Men may say, there is a true *Nathaniel*, and God may say, there is a self-deceiving *Pharisee*.

Reader thou hast heard of Judas and Demas, of Ananias and Sapphira, of Hymeneus and Philetus, once renowned and famous professors, and thou hast heard what they proved at last.

Take heed their case be not thine own. Do they not all, as it were with one mouth, cry to thee, "O professor! if thou wilt not come where we are, do not deceive thyself as we did. If thou expectest a better place and lot, be sure thou get a sincerer heart. Had we been more self-suspicious, we had been more safe."

I would not scare you with needless jealousies, but I would fain prevent fatal mistakes. Do not you find your hearts deceitful in many things? Do not you shuffle over secret duties? Do not you censure the same evils in others, which you scarce reprove in yourselves? Are there not many *by-ends* in duties? Do not you find, that you are far

less affected with a great deal of service and honour done to God by others, than with a little by yourselves?

Is it not hard to look upon other men's excellencies, without envy, or upon your own, without pride?

And are you not troubled with a busy devil, as well as with a bad heart? Hath not he that circuits the whole world, observed you? Hath not he studied your constitution-sins, and found out that sin which most easily besets you? Hath he less malice against your souls than others? Surely you are in the very thicket of temptations, thousands of snares are round about you. O how difficultly are the righteous saved! How hard to be upright!—How few even of the professing world, win heaven at last!

O therefore search your hearts, professors, and let this caution go down to your very reins—"Let him that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall."

Away with rash uncharitable censures of others, and be more just and severe in censuring yourselves. Away with dry and unprofitable controversies, and spend your thoughts upon this great question, Am I sound, or am I rotten at heart? Am I a new creature, or the old creature still in a new creature's dress and habit? Beg the Lord that you be not deceived in that great point (your integrity), whatever you may be mistaken in. Pray that you be not given up to an heedless, careless, and vain spirit, and then have religious duties for a rattle, to still and quiet your consciences.

Surely that ground-work can never be laid too sure, upon which so great a stress as thy soul and eternity must depend. It will not repent thee (I dare promise) when thou comest to die, that thou hast employed thy time and strength to this end. Whilst others are panting after the dust of the earth,

and saying, Who will shew us any good? be thou panting after the assurance of the love of God, and crying, Who will shew me how to make *my calling and election sure?*

O deceive not yourselves with names and notions! Think not, because you are for a stricter way of worship, or because you associate with (and are accordingly denominated) one of the more reformed professors, that therefore you are safe enough. Alas! how small an interest have titles, modes, and denominations in religion! Suppose a curious artist take a lump of lead and refine it, and cast it into the mould, whence it comes forth shining, and bearing some noble figure, suppose of an eagle, yet it is but a leaden eagle. Suppose the figure of a man, and that in the most exact lineaments and proportions; yet still it is but a leaden man. Nay, let it bear the figure of an angel, it is but a leaden angel: for the base and ignoble matter is the same it was, though the figure be not. Even so, take an unregenerate carnal man, let his life be reformed, and his tongue refined, and call him a zealous *Conformist*, or a strict *Non-conformist*; call him a *Presbyterian*, an *Independant*, or what you will; he is all the while but a carnal conformist, or non-conformist; an unregenerate presbyterian, a carnal independant, for the nature is still the same, though the stamp and figure his profession gives him be not the same.

O my friends! believe it, fine names and brave words are of little value with God. God will no more spare you for these, than Samuel did Agag for his delicate ornaments and spruce appearance. Either make sure the root of the matter, or the leaves of a vain profession will no tlong cover you.

To be deceived by another is bad enough, but to deceive ourselves is a thousand times worse.

To deceive ourselves in truths of the superstructure is bad, and they that do so shall suffer loss, 1 *Cor.* iii. 12. But to deceive ourselves in the foundation, is a desperate deceit, and shipwrecks all our hope and happiness at once.

If any man lose his money by a cheat, it troubles him; but to lose his soul by a cheat, will confound him. If a man lose an eye, an ear, a hand, a foot, yet as *Chrysostom* speaks, "God hath given these members double, so that there's another left. But the soul is one, and only one, and if that be damned, you have not another to be saved."

O therefore be restless, till it be, and till you know it be out of external danger!

SECT. VI.

Use. 3. To conclude; if so many professors of religion be cheated in their profession, let all that are well satisfied and assured of their integrity, bless the Lord, whilst they live, for that mercy. O it is a mercy that no unsanctified soul can have: yea, and it is a mercy that many gracious souls do not obtain, though they seek it with tears, and would part with all the pleasant things they have in the world to enjoy it.

This is that mercy that gives souls the highest pleasure this world is acquainted with, or the state of this mortality can bear. For let the well-assured soul but consider what it is assured of—Christ, with the purchases of his blood. O what is this! 'I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine.' *Cant.* ii. 16. What a vital, ravishing, over-powering efficacy is in that voice of faith! Let it but look back a few years, and compare what it was with what it is; it was afar off, it is now made nigh, *Ephes.* ii. 12, 13. It was not beloved, but is now beloved, *Rom.* xv. 26. It had not obtained mercy, but now hath obtained mercy, 1 *Pet.* ii.

10. Or let the assured soul look forward, and compare what it now is, and hath, with what it shortly shall be made, and put in possession of. 'Beloved, (saith the apostle,) now are we the sons of God: but it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is,' 1 *John* iii. 2.

I say, let the assured soul but keep its thoughts, by meditation, in these subjects, and it will be impossible to keep him from the most agreeable transports of joy and delight.

O what a life you have in comparison of other men! Some have two hells: one present, another coming. You have two heavens, one in hand, the other in hope. Some of your own brethren in Christ, that have been many years panting after assurance, are still denied it; but God hath indulged so peculiar a favour to you. Bless ye the Lord, and make his praise glorious.

CHAP. III.

Containing the use and improvement of

DOCT. II.

That true grace is exceeding precious, and greatly enriches the soul that hath it: It is Christ's gold.

SECT. I.

THE Lord Jesus here chooseth the most pure, precious, resplendent, durable, and valuable thing, in all the treasures and magazines of nature, to shadow forth saving grace, which is infinitely more excellent. Certainly that must be the best thing, which the best things in nature can but imperfect-

ly shadow forth. What was the golden oil emptied through the two golden pipes, *Zech.* iv. 12, but the precious graces of God, flowing through Christ into all his members. Gold is precious; but one drachm of saving grace is more precious than all the gold of Ophir. 'It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for a price thereof,' *Job* xxviii. 15. Surely gold and silver, sapphires, diamonds, and rubies are not worth mentioning, when saving grace is once mentioned. For consider it,

First, In its cause and fountain, from whence it flows, and you shall find it to be the fruit of the Spirit, *Gal.* v. 22, who upon that account is called the Spirit of grace, *Heb.* x. 29. It derives its original from the Most High; it is spirit born of the Spirit, *John* iii. 6. All the rules of morality, all human diligence and industry can never produce one gracious habit or act alone, *2 Cor.* iii. 5. 'Not that we are sufficient of ourselves,' &c.

Nay, we speak not becoming the incomparable worth of grace, when we say, it is the fruit and birth of the Spirit, for so are common gifts also. There are several emanations from this sun, diverse streams from this fountain, but of all his operations and productions, this of saving grace is the most noble and excellent. Gifts are from the Spirit as well as grace, but grace is more excellent than the best gifts, *1 Cor.* xii. 31. 'Covet earnestly the best gifts, and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.' Hence you read in *Phil.* i. 10, of things that are excellent, or as the original might be rendered, things that differ, namely, in respect of excellency; not as good and evil, but as less good and more good differ. Gifts have their value and preciousness, but the best gifts differ as much from grace as brass from gold, though both flow from the same source. Gifts (as one saith) are dead

graces, but graces are living gifts. It is the most excellent production of the highest and most excellent cause.

Secondly, Consider it in its nature, and you will find it divine, 2 *Pet.* i. 4. 'Partakers of the divine nature,' viz. in our sanctification. Not that it gives us the properties of the divine nature, they are incommunicable; but the similitude and resemblance of it is stamped upon our souls, in the work of grace.

'The new man is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him, *Col.* iii. 10. The schoolmen, and some of the fathers, place this image or resemblance of God, in the natural faculties of the soul, viz. the understanding, memory, and will, which is an umbrage of a trinity in unity; but it rather consists in the renovation of the faculties by grace. In this we bear the divine image upon our souls, and that image, or resemblance of God in holiness, is the beauty and honour of our souls.

It is their beauty: 'How fair, and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights!' saith Christ of his people, *Cant.* vii. 6. Natural beauty consists in the symmetry and comely proportion of parts, each with the other; spiritual beauty in the harmony or agreeableness of our souls to God: and as it is our chiefest beauty, so certainly it is our highest honour. It gives us access unto God, who is the fountain of honour and glory: and this makes the righteous more excellent than his neighbour. Let his neighbour be what he will, though the blood of nobles runs in his veins, the righteous is more excellent than he, except saving grace be also diffused into his soul.

Thirdly. Consider it as it respects the subject who receives it, and you will find its value still to increase; for the precious oil of saving grace is never poured into any other than an elect vessel.

Hence, faith, one branch of sanctification, is, with respect to its subject, styled the faith of God's elect, *Tit.* i. 1. Whosoever finds true grace in his soul, may (during the evidence thereof) from it strongly conclude his election, looking backward; and his salvation, looking forward, *Rom.* viii. 30. It marks and seals the person in whom it is, for glory. 'God hath set apart him that is godly for himself.' *Psalms* iv. 3.

Fourthly, View the precious worth of grace, in its excellent effects and influences upon the soul, in which it inheres.

(1.) It adorns it with incomparable ornaments, which are of great price in the sight of God, *1 Pet.* iii. 4. Yea, it reflects such beams of glory in the soul where its seat is, that Christ himself, the author, is also the admirer of it, *Cant.* iv. 9. 'Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse! thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one of the chains of thy neck!' and as one overcome with its excelling beauty, he saith, 'Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me.' *Cant.* vi. 5.

(2.) It elevates and ennobles a man's spirit, beyond all other principles in man. It sets the heart and affections upon heaven, and takes them up with the glory of the invisible world, *Phil.* iii. 20. 'But our conversation is in heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour.' Whilst others are trading for corn and wine, for sheep and oxen, for feathers and trifles, the gracious soul is trading with God for pardon and peace, for righteousness and life, for glory and immortality. 'Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ,' *1 John* i. 3.

(3.) It doth not only raise the spirit by conversing with God and things above, but transforms the soul, by that converse, into the likeness of those

heavenly objects with which it converses. It changes them into the same image, *2 Cor.* iii. 18. So that, though the sanctified man still remains the who he was, yet not the what he was before. The very temper of his spirit is altered.

(4.) It doth not only transform the soul in which it is, but preserves the subject in which it is. It is a singular preservative from sin; so that though sin be in them still, and works in them still, yet it cannot prevail in them, still to fulfil the lusts of it, as it was wont to do, *Gal.* v. 17. Sin conceives, but cannot bring forth fruit unto death.

(5.) Grace doth not only preserve from sin, but establishes the soul in which it is, far beyond any other arguments without, or any other principles within a man. 'It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace,' *Heb.* xiii. 9. This is that which the apostle calls our own-steadfastness, or that ballast we have within ourselves, which keeps us firm and stable. O the excellency of grace!

(6.) To conclude; it is the root of all that precious fruit which we bring forth to God in this world. It is the root of every gracious word in our lips, and of every gracious work in our hands. Be the matter of our gracious thoughts never so excellent, the matter of our heavenly discourses and prayers never so sweet, still grace is the root of the matter, *Job* xix. 28. O then what a precious thing is grace!

Fifthly. View it in its properties, and you will sooner discover its transcendent excellencies. The richest epithets are no hyperboles here. We speak not beyond the value of it when we call it supernatural grace, for so it is. It comes down from above, from the Father of lights, *Jam.* i. 17. Nature can never be improved to that height, how much soever its admirers boast of it. Nor do we strain too high, when we call it Immortal Grace;

for so hath God made it. This is that water, which springs up, in the sanctified soul, unto eternal life, *John* iv. 14. It will not die when thou diest, but ascend with the soul, from which it is inseparable, and be received with it up into glory, *Rom.* viii. 10. You may outlive your friends, you may outlive your estates, you may outlive your gifts, but you cannot outlive your graces.

Shall I say, it is the most sweet and comfortable thing that ever the soul was acquainted with in this world, next to Jesus Christ, the author and fountain of it? Surely, if I so speak, I have as many witnesses to attest it, as there be gracious souls in the world. Nothing is more comfortable than grace, except Christ; and yet without grace no soul can feel the comforts of Christ, in the troubles of life, or in the straits of death. This is a spring of comfort!

Sixthly. Consider it in its design and scope; and you will still discern more and more of its precious excellency. For what is the aim and end of God, in the infusions and improvements of grace, but to attemper and mould our spirits by it, into a meetness and fitness for the enjoyment of himself in the world to come? *Col.* i. 12. 'Giving thanks to the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:' Compare this with *2 Cor.* v. 5. 'Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing, is God.'

O blessed design! how precious must that work be, which is wrought for so high and glorious a purpose as this is? No work more excellent, no end more noble.

Seventhly. Consider the means and instruments, both principal and subordinate, employed in this work. Many blessed instruments are set on work to beget, preserve, and improve it in our souls, and these all speak the precious worth of it. No wise

man will dig for a base and worthless metal with golden mattocks. The blood of Christ was shed to procure it, *Heb.* xiii. 12.

The Spirit of God is sent forth to form and create it; for it is his own workmanship; *Ephes.* ii. 10, his fruit; *Gal.* v. 12.

The ordinances and officers of the gospel were at first instituted, and ever since continued in the church, for this work's sake, *John* xvii. 17, and *Eph.* iv. 12. It is the fruit of Christ's blood; yea, and it hath cost the sweat and blood of the dispensers of the gospel too.

Nay, all the works of providence look this way, and aim at this thing, *Rom.* 28. What is the errand of all God's rods, but to make us partakers of his holiness? *Heb.* xii. 16.

Eighthly. The high value that the most high God sets upon grace, shews it to be an excellent thing indeed. 'It is of great price in his sight,' 1 *Pet.* iii. 4. No service finds acceptance with God, but what is performed by grace. None but sanctified vessels are meet for the master's use. 'The end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart.' 1 *Tim.* i. 5.

The weakest performances of grace find their acceptance with him, though clogged with many sinful weaknesses and infirmities, *Heb.* xi. 31, 32. If God so prize it, well may we. He that made the jewel best understands the value of it.

Ninthly. The hypocritical pretences made to it, all over the professing world, shew what a most precious and desirable thing it is. If there were not some singular glory in it, why doth every one covet to be reputed gracious? Nay, the devil himself baits many of his hooks of temptation with a shew of grace; for he knows sin hath no native beauty of its own to entice, and therefore he borrows the paint and pretence of holiness to cover it.

But, oh! in what a dilemma, will the hypocrite find himself at last? And how can he answer it when God shall demand his soul?

If grace were evil, why didst thou so affect the name and reputation of it? And if it were good, why didst thou satisfy thyself with the empty name and shadow of it only?

Tenthly. To conclude: The incomparable esteem that all good men have for it, shews it to be a thing of inestimable price.

Grace is the sum of all their prayers, the scope of all their endeavours, the matter of their chief joy, the reward of their afflictions and sufferings; their chief joys and sorrows, hopes and fears in this world are taken up about it. By all which it appears that its price is above rubies; and all the gold and silver in the world are but dung and dross in comparison with it.

SECT. II.

Containing six practical inferences from this precious truth.

Inference 1. Is saving grace more precious than gold? Let them that have it, bless God for it, and not boast. Men's hearts are as apt to puff up and swell with spiritual as with material gold. It is hard to be an owner of much of this gold and not be lifted up with it. To keep down thy heart, and preserve thine eyes from being dazzled with these thy gracious excellencies, it will be needful for thee, Christian, sometimes to consider,

That, although grace be one of the most excellent things which ever God created, yet it is but a creature, a dependent thing, 1 *Cor.* v. 17.

Yea, it is not only a creature, but a very imperfect creature yet, in thy soul, labouring under many weaknesses, *Phil.* iii. 12, and sometimes ready to die, *Rev.* 2.

Though it can do many things for you, yet it cannot justify you before God. You cannot make a garment of it to cover your guilt, nor plead the dignity of it at God's bar for your discharge. It is not your inherent, but Christ's imputed righteousness must do that for you, though in other respects it be very necessary.

Nay, remember how excellent soever it be, it is not the native growth and product of your hearts. All the grace you have is foreign to your natures; and what you have is received, *1 Cor. iv. 7.*

And lastly, remember, he that is most proud and conceited of his own graces, will be found to be the owner of least grace, and hath most cause to question whether he hath any or no. It is the nature of grace to humble, abase, and empty the the soul; and it is the strength of our corruptions which thus puffs us up with vain conceits.

Infer. 2. Is saving grace more excellent than gold? What cause then have the poorest Christians to be well satisfied with their lot! To others God hath given Ishmael's portion, the fatness of the earth; to you, Isaac's, the graces of the covenant. Their portion is paid in brass, yours in gold. Many of you are poor in the world, but 'rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which God hath promised,' *Jam. ii. 5.* What is the dust of the earth to the fruits of the Spirit? You are troubled that you have no more of the world. It may be if you had more gold, you would have less grace. You consider not, how many are poor and wretched in both worlds; moneyless and Christless too. You do not consider you are come near that state in which all your wants will be fully supplied; where you shall not need the treasures of the earth, and have your desires satisfied out of the treasures of grace and glory.

Infer. 3. Is saving grace gold? yea, infinitely

more precious than gold? Then surely declining Christians are great losers, and have cause to be great mourners. The remission of the least degree of grace, is more to be lamented than the loss of the greatest sum of gold.

Though the habits of grace be not lost, yet the acts of grace may be suspended, *2 Sam.* xii. 31. The degrees of grace may be remitted, *Rev.* iii. 3. The evidences of grace may be clouded, and consequently the comforts of grace may be suspended, *Isa.* l. 10; and the least of these is such a loss, as all the treasures of the earth cannot repair. Well, therefore, may declined christians challenge the first place among all the mourners in the world.

Infer. 4. Is grace so invaluablely precious? How precious then ought the ordinances of God to be to our souls, by which grace is first communicated, and afterwards improved in our souls! ‘The law of thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver,’ *Psal.* cxix. 72; and good reason, whilst it imparts and improves that, to which gold and silver are but dross and dung.

None but those that value not grace, will ever slight the means, or despise and injure the instruments thereof. It is a sad sign of a graceless world, when these precious things fall under contempts and slights.

Infer. 5. If grace be so precious, how watchful should all gracious persons be in the days of temptation! The design of temptation is to rob you of your treasure. When cut-purses get into the crowd, we use to say, Friends, look to your purses. How many brave Christians have we read and heard of, that have rather chosen to part with their lives than with their graces; who have ‘resisted unto blood, striving against sin!’ *Heb.* xii. 4.

O Christians! you live in a cheating age. Many seeming christians have lost all, and many real

christians have lost much ; so much, that they are like to see but little comfort in this world. They are like to go mourning to the grave, with that lamentation, Job xxix. 2, 3. "O that it were with me, as in times past!"

Infer. 6. To conclude—is there such precious worth in saving grace? *Then bless God for it, and diligently use all means to increase and improve it, in your souls.* It is gold for preciousness, and for usefulness, and must not be laid up in a napkin. That is a sin, condemned by the very scope of that parable, Matt. xxv. 14, 15.

All christians, indeed, have not the same advantages of improvement. But all must improve it, according to the advantages they have, in order to an account. Reserved christians, who live too abstracted from the society and communion of others, and disperse not their streams abroad to the benefit of others, nor improve the graces of others for their own benefit, are wanting both to their own duty and comfort. See you a man rich in grace, O trade with him if you can, to improve yourselves by him ; and the rather, because you know not how soon death may snatch him from you, and with him all his stock of grace is gone from you too, except what you made your own, whilst you conversed with him. But, alas ! instead of holy, profitable, soul-improving communion, some are sullenly reserved, some are negligent and lazy, some are litigious and wrangling, more apt to draw forth the dross than the gold ; I mean the corruptions, than graces, of others. And how few there be, that carry on a profitable trade for increase of grace, is sad to consider.

And as we neglect to improve grace, by communion with men, so I suspect many christians thrive but little, in their communion with God. We are too seldom in our closets, too little upon our knees.

And when we are there, we gain but little; we come not off such gainers by duty as we might. O christian! think when you are hearing and praying, I am now trading with heaven, for that which is infinitely better than gold. *God is rich to all that call upon him.* What a treasure may I get this hour, if the fault be not in mine own heart! And thus much for the second observation.



CHAP. IV.

Wherein the third doctrine being the main subject of this treatise, is opened, and the method of the whole discourse stated.

DOCT. I.

That only is to be accounted true grace, which is able to endure all those trials appointed or permitted for the discovery of it.

SECT. I.

THE most wise God hath seen it fit, to set all his people in a state of trial, in this world. First—He tries, and then he crowns them. James i. 12.—“Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, [probation, or trial] for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life,” &c.

No man can say what he is, whether his graces be true or false, till they are tried and examined by those things, which are to them as fire is to gold. These self-deceivers in the text thought they had grace; yea, they thought they had been rich in grace, but it proved no better than dross. And therefore Christ here counsels them, to buy of him *gold tried in the fire*; that is, true grace indeed.

which appears to be so upon the various proofs and examinations of its sincerity, that are to be made in this world, as well as in the great solemn trial it must come to, in the world to come.

The scriptures speak of a twofold trial, *viz.*

A trial of men's opinions and graces.

First, The opinions and judgments of men are tried as by fire. In this sense we are to understand that place, 1 Cor. iii. 12, 13. "Now if any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire, and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is."

The text speaks of such persons as held the foundation of christianity, but yet superstructed such doctrines and practices, as were no more able to endure the trial, than hay, wood, or stubble can endure the fire.* Such a person hereby brings himself into danger; and though the apostle will not deny the possibility, yet he asserts the difficulty of his salvation. *He shall be saved, yet so as by fire*;† that is, as a man saved by leaping out of his house at midnight, when it is all on fire; for so that phrase imports, Amos iv. 11, and Jude 23.—He is glad to escape naked, and with the loss of his goods, and blesses God that his life is preserved.—As little regard shall such have to their erroneous notions and unscriptural opinions, at last.

Secondly, The graces of men are brought to the test, as well as their opinions. Trial will be made of their *hearts*, as well as of their *heads*; and upon this trial, the everlasting safety and happiness of the person depends. If a man's *opinions* be some

* Upon a thorough trial, they vanish into smoke.

† From which judgment he shall escape just as one does naked, or with his bare life, out of the midst of flames.—*Chrysostom.*

of them found hay or stubble, yet so long as he holds the head, and is right in the foundation, he may be saved; but if a man's *supposed graces* be found so, all the world cannot save him. There is no way of escape, if he finally deceive himself herein. And of this trial of graces my text speaks. Sincere grace is *gold tried by fire*.

There is a twofold trial of grace; *active* and *passive*.

First, An active trial of it, in which we try it ourselves; 2 Cor. xiii. 5. *Examine yourselves; prove yourselves*; that is, measure your hearts, duties and graces by the rule of the word. See how they answer to that rule. Bring your hearts and the word together by solemn self-examination. Confer with your reins, and commune with your own hearts.

Secondly, A passive trial of it. Whether we try it or not, God will try it; he will bring our gold to the touchstone, and to the fire. "Thou, O Lord, knowest me; thou hast seen me, and tried mine heart towards thee," saith the prophet, Jer. xii. 3.

Sometimes he tries the strength and ability of his servants' graces. Thus he tried *Abraham*, Heb. xi. 17. And sometimes he tries the soundness and sincerity of our graces. So the *Ephesian angel* was tried, and found dross, Rev. ii. 2. And so Job was tried, and found true gold, Job xxiii. 10. These trials are not made by God for his own information. He knows what is in man. His eyes pierce his heart and reins. But they are for our information, which is the true sense of Deut. viii. 2. "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thy heart;" that is, to make thee know it, by giving thee such experiments and trials of it, in those wilderness straits and difficulties.

And these are the trials of grace I am here to speak of, not excluding the active trials made by ourselves. No, all these trials made by God upon us, are designed to put us upon the trial of ourselves. When God tries, we should try too.

Now the method in which I shall arrange this discourse, shall be to shew you,

First, what those things are, which try the sincerity of our graces, as fire tries gold.

Secondly, For what ends doth God put the graces of his people upon such trials, in this world.

Thirdly, That such grace only is sincere, as can endure these trials.

Fourthly and lastly, To apply the whole, in the main uses of it.

SECT. II.

First, What these things are, which try the sincerity of grace, as fire tries gold.

Before I enter into particulars, it will be needful to acquaint you, that the subject before me is full of difficulties. There is need (as one speaks) of much cautious respect to the various sizes and degrees of growth among christians, and the vicissitudes of their inward case; else, we may darken and perplex the way, instead of clearing it.

The portrait of a christian is such as none can draw to one model. Respect must be had to the infancy of some, as well as the age and strength of others.

Great care ought also to be taken in the application of marks and signs. We should first try *them*, before we try ourselves or others by them. Marks and signs are by some distinguished into *exclusive*, *inclusive* and *positive*. *Exclusive* marks serve to shut out bold pretenders, by shewing them how far they come short of a saving work of grace; and they are commonly taken from some necessary

common duty, as hearing, praying, &c. He that doth not these things, cannot have any work of grace in him, and yet if he do them, he cannot from thence conclude his estate to be gracious. He that so concludes, deceives himself.

Inclusive marks rather discover the degrees than the truth of grace, and are rather intended for comfort than for conviction. If we find them in ourselves, we do not only find sincerity, but eminency of grace. They are taken from some raised degree and eminent acts of graces, in confirmed and grown christians.

Betwixt the two former there is a middle sort of marks which are called *positive* marks, and they are such as are always and only found in regenerate souls. The hypocrite hath them not. The grown christian hath them, and that in an eminent degree. The poorest christian hath them in a lower, but saving degree. Great care must be taken in the application of them. And it is past doubt, that many weak and injudicious christians have been greatly prejudiced, by finding the experiences of eminent christians proposed, as rules to measure their sincerity by. Alas! these no more fit their souls, than Saul's armour did David's body.

These things being premised, and a due care carried along with us through this discourse, I shall next come to the particulars, and shew you what those things are, which discover the state and tempers of our souls. And though it be true, that there is no condition we are in, no providence that befalls us, but it affords some proof, and makes some discovery of our hearts; yet to limit this discourse, and fall into particulars as soon as we can, I shall shew what trials are made of our graces in this world, by our *prosperity* and our *adversity*, by our *corruptions* and our *duties*, and, lastly, by our *sufferings*, upon the score and account of religion.

SECT. III.

First, Prosperity, success, and the increase of outward enjoyments, are to grace what fire is to gold. Riches and honours make trial of what we are; and by these things many a false heart has been detected, as well as the sincerity and eminency of other graces discovered. We may fancy the fire of prosperity to be rather for comfort than trial, to refresh us rather than to prove us, but you will find prosperity to be a great discoverer, and that scarce any thing proves the truth and strength of men's graces and corruptions more than that doth. Says *Bernard*, "To find humility with honour, is to find a phoenix." Let an obscure person be lifted up to honour, and how steady and well composed soever he was before, it is a thousand to one but his eyes will dazzle, and his head run round, when he is upon the lofty pinnacle of praise and honour, Prov. xxvii. 21. "As the fining-pot for silver, and the furnace for gold, so is a man to his praise."—Put the best gold into the fining-pot of praise, and it is a great wonder if a great deal of dross do not appear, Isa. xxxix. 2. The vain glory of good Hezekiah rose, like a froth or scum upon the pot, when heated by prosperity. It was such a fining-pot to Herod, as discovered him to be dross itself. Acts xii. 23. How did that poor worm swell, under that trial, into the conceit of a God, and was justly destroyed by worms, because he forgot himself to be one! We little think, what a strange alteration an exalted estate will make upon our spirits. When the prophet would abate the vain confidence of Hazeel, who could not believe that ever he should be turned into such a savage beast as the prophet had foretold, he only tells him, *The Lord hath shewed me, that thou shalt be king over Syria*, 2 Kings, viii. 13. The meaning is,

do not be too confident Hazael, that thy temper and disposition can never alter to that degree. Thou never yet sattest on a throne. When men see the crown upon thy head, then they will better see the true temper of thy heart.

How humble was *Israel* in the wilderness ! How tame and tractable in a lean pasture ! But bring them once into *Canaan*, and the world is strangely altered ; then, *we are Lords*, say they, *we will come no more unto thee*, Jer. ii. 2, 7, 31. Prosperity is a crisis, both to grace and corruption.—Thence is that caution to *Israel*, Deut. x. 11, 12.—“When thou hast eaten, and art full, then beware lest thou forget the Lord thy God.” Then beware, that is the critical time. Surely, that man must be acknowledged rich, very rich in grace, whose grace suffers no diminution or eclipse by his wealth ; and that man deserves double honour, whose pride the honours of this world cannot provoke and inflame.

It was a sad truth from the lips of a pious divine, in Germany, upon his death-bed. When being somewhat disconsolate, by reflecting upon the barrenness of his life, some friends took thence an occasion to commend him, and mind him of his painful ministry, and fruitful life among them, he cried out, *Withdraw the fire, for I have chaff in me*. Meaning that he felt his ambition, like chaff, catching fire from the sparkles of their praises. Like to this was the saying of another, *He that praiseth me, wounds me*.

But, to descend into the particular discoveries, that prosperity and honour make of the *want* of grace in some, and of the *weakness* of grace in others ; I will shew you what *symptoms of hypocrisy* appear upon some men under the trials of prosperity, and what *signs of grace* appear in others, under the same trial.

SECT. IV.

PROSPERITY discovers many sad symptoms of an evil heart. Among others, these are ordinarily most conspicuous.

1. It casts the hearts of some men into a deep oblivion of God, and makes them lay aside all care of duty. "The altars of rich men seldom smoke." *Deut.* xxxii. 13, 14, 15. Jeshurun sucked honey out of the rock, eat the fat of lambs, and kidneys of wheat: But what was the effect of this? He kicked, and forsook the God who made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation. Instead of lifting up their hearts in an humble, thankful acknowledgment of God's bounty, they lifted up the heel in a wanton abuse of his mercy. In the fattest earth we find the most slippery footing.

He that is truly gracious may, in prosperity, remit some degrees, but a carnal heart there loseth all that which in a low condition, he seemed to have. Agur's deprecation, as to himself, no doubt was built upon his frequent observation how it was with others; *Prov.* xxx. 8, 9. 'Lest I be full, and deny God.'

It is said in *Eccles.* v. 12, 'That the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep.' I wish that were the worst injury it did him. But, alas! it will not suffer him to pray, to meditate, to allow time and thoughts about his eternal concerns. He falls asleep in the lap of prosperity, and forgets that there is a God to be served, or a soul to be saved. This is a dangerous symptom of a very graceless heart!

2. Prosperity meeting with a graceless heart, makes it wholly sensual, and entirely swallows up its thoughts and affections. Earthly things transform and mould their hearts into their own similitude and nature. The whole strength of their souls

goes out to those enjoyments. So those graceless yet prosperous persons are described, *Job* xxi. 11, 12, 13. 'They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ: they spend their days in wealth? They take the timbrel, not the bible. They rejoice at the sound of the organ; not a word of their rejoicing in God. They send forth their little ones in the dance. That is all the catechism they are taught. They spend their days in wealth. Their whole time, that precious stock and talent, is wholly laid out upon these sensitive things. Either the pleasure of it powerfully charms them; or the cares of it so wholly engross their minds, that there is no time to spare for God. They live in pleasure upon earth, as it is, *Jam.* v. 5, just as the fish lives in the water, its proper element.—Take him off from these things, and put him upon spiritual, serious, heavenly employments, and he is like a fish upon the dry land.

Now, though prosperity may too much influence and ensnare the minds of good men, and estrange them too much from heavenly things, yet thus to engross their hearts, and convert them into their own similitude and nature, so that these things should be the centre of their hearts, the very proper element in which they live, is utterly impossible.

An hypocrite indeed may be brought to this, because, though Janus-like, he have two faces, yet he really hath but one principle; and that is wholly carnal and earthly. So that it is easy to make all the water to run in one channel; to gather all into one entire stream, in which his heart shall pour out all its strength to the creature.

But a christian indeed hath a double principle that actuates him. Though he have a law of sin that moves him one way, yet there is in him also the law of grace, which thwarts and crosses that

principle of corruption. So, that as grace cannot do what it would because of sin; neither can sin do what it would because of grace, *Gal. v. 17.*

The heart of a christian, in the midst of ensnaring sensitive enjoyments, finds indeed a corrupt principle in it, which would incline him to fall asleep upon such a soft pillow, and forget God and duty. But it cannot do so.—There is a principle of grace, within him, that never leaves disturbing, and calling upon him, till he rise and return to his God, the true rest of his soul.

3. A false pretender to religion, an hypocritical professor, meeting with prosperity and success, grows altogether unconcerned about the interest of religion, and senseless of the calamities of God's people. Thus the prophet convinces the Jews of their hypocrisy, *Amos vi. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.* 'They were at ease in Zion, and trusted in the mountains of Samaria.' And so, having a shadow of religion, and fulness of earthly things, they fell to feasting and sporting. 'They drank wine in bowls, and anointed themselves with the chief ointments, but were not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.' If they are out of danger once, let the church shift for itself. Let the birds of prey catch and devour that flock with which they sometimes associated, they are not touched with it. Moses could not do so, though in the greatest security and confluence of the honours and pleasures of Egypt, *Acts vii. 23.* *Nehemiah* could not do so, though the servant and favourite of a mighty monarch, and wanted nothing to make him outwardly happy; yet the pleasures of a king's court could not cheer his heart, or scatter the clouds of sorrow from his countenance, whilst his brethren were in affliction, and the city of his God lay waste, *Nehemiah ii. 1, 2, 3.* Nor indeed can any gracious heart be unconcerned and senseless, for that union which all the saints have

with Christ their head, and with one another as fellow members in Christ, will beget sympathy among them in their sufferings, 1 *Cor.* xii. 26.

SECT. V.

BUT as the fire of prosperity discovers this and much more dross in a graceless heart, so it discovers the sincerity and grace of God's people. I say not that it discovers nothing but grace in them. O that it did not! alas! many of them have had a great deal of dross and corruption discovered by it, as was noted before. But yet in this trial, the graciousness and uprightness of their hearts will appear in these and such like workings of it.

1. Under prosperity, success, and honour, the upright heart will labour to suppress pride, and keep itself lowly and humble; and still the more grace there is, the more humility there will be. If God lift him up, he will lay himself low, and exalt his God high. So did Jacob, when God had raised and enlarged him; *Gen.* xxxii. 10, 'I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands.'

Great was the difference in Jacob's outward condition at his return, from what it was at his first passage over Jordan: then poor, now rich; then single and comfortless, now the head of a great family. But though his outward estate was altered, the frame of his heart was not altered. Jacob was an holy and humble man when he went out, and so he was when he returned. He saw a multitude of mercies about him, and among them all not one but was greater than himself.

I dare not say, every christian, under prosperity, can at all times manifest like humility; but I am sure what pride and vanity soever may rise in a

gracious heart, tried by prosperity, there is that within him which will give check to it. He dare not suffer such proud thoughts to lodge quietly in his heart; for, alas! he sees that in himself, and that in his God, which will abase him. Grace will make him look back to his original condition, and say with David, ‘What am I, O Lord God? and what is my father’s house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?’ 2 Sam. vii. 18.

It will make him look in, and see the baseness of his own heart, and the corruptions that are there, and admire at the dealings of God with so vile a creature. O, thinks he, if others did but know what I know of myself, they would abhor me, more than now they esteem and value me.

2. Prosperity usually draws forth the saints’ love to the God of their mercies. That which heats a wicked man’s lusts, warms a gracious man’s heart with love and delight in God.

These were ‘the words of that lovely song which David sang, in the day that the Lord delivered him out of the hands of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul: ‘I will love thee, O Lord, my strength,’ *Psalms* xviii. *Title and ver.* 1 compared. These outward things are not the main grounds and motives of their love to God; no, they love him when he takes away, as well as when he gives. But they are sanctified instruments to inflame their love to God. They boil up a wicked man’s lust, but they melt a gracious man’s soul. O in what a pang of love did David go into the presence of God, under the sense of his mercies! his melting mercies! when he thus poured out his whole soul in a stream of love to his God, 2 Sam. vii. 19, 20. ‘Is this the manner of men, O Lord God! And what can David say more unto thee?’ An expression that turns up the very bottom of his heart.

3. Prosperity and comfortable providences do usually become cautions against sin, when they meet with a sanctified soul. This is the natural inference of a gracious soul from them. Hath God pleased me, then hath he obliged me to take more care to please him. O let me not grieve him that hath comforted me! So *Ezra*, ix. 13. 'After such a deliverance as this, should we again break thy commandments!' What! break his commandments who hath broken our bonds! God forbid!

It was an excellent resolution of a christian once, who receiving an eminent mercy at the same time he felt himself under the power of a special corruption; "Well, now will I go forth in the strength of this mercy, to mortify and subdue that corruption." I will not measure every christian by the eminent workings of grace in some one, but surely so far I may safely go, that sincerity knows not how to sin, because grace hath abounded, any more than it dare sin, that grace may abound.

4. A truly gracious soul will not be satisfied with all the prosperity and comforts in the world for his portion. Not thine, Lord, but thee, is the voice of grace. When providence had been more than ordinarily bountiful in outward things to Luther, he began to be afraid of its meaning, and earnestly protested God should not put him off so. 'The Lord is my portion, saith my soul,' *Lam.* iii. 24, and the soul can best tell what it hath made its choice, and whereon it hath bestowed its chief delights and expectations.

An unsound heart will accept these for its portion. If the world be sure to him, and his designs fail not there, he can be content to leave God, and soul, and heaven, and hell at hazard: but so cannot the upright. These things in subordination; but neither these nor any thing under the sun in comparison with, or opposit on to God.

CHAP. V.

Shewing what probation adversity makes of the sincerity or unsoundness of our hearts.

SECT. I.

THAT adversity is a furnace, to try of what metal our hearts are, none can doubt, who hath either studied the Scriptures, or observed his heart under afflictions.

When the dross and rust of hypocrisy and corruption had almost eaten out the heart of religion among the Jews, then saith God, 'I will melt them, and try them: for what shall I do for the daughter of my people?' *Jer.* ix. 7. Here affliction is the furnace, and the people are the metal cast into it, and the end of it is trial. 'I will melt them and try them;' what other course shall I take with them? If I let them alone, their lusts, like the rust and canker in metals, will eat them out. Prosperity multiplies professors, and adversity brings them to the test: then hirelings quickly become changelings. The gilded potsherd glisters till it come to scouring. The devil thought Job had been such a one, and moves that he may be tried this way; being confident he would be found but dross in the trial, *Job.* i. 11. But though the furnace of affliction discovered some dross in him (as it will in the best of men) yet he came forth as gold.

In this furnace also grace is manifested. It is said, *Rev.* xiii. 10, 'Here is the patience and faith of the saints;' that is, here is the trial and discovery of it in these days of adversity. It was a weighty saying of Tertullian to the persecutors of the church in his days, 'Your wickedness is the trial of our innocency.' Constantius, the father of Constantine, made an explanatory decree, that all

who would not renounce the christian faith, should lose their places of honour and profit. This presently separated the dross from the gold, which was his design. Many renounced christianity, and thereupon were renounced by him; and those that held their integrity, were received into favour.

In time of prosperity, hypocrisy lies covered in the heart, like nests in the green bushes; but when the winter of adversity hath made them bare, every body may see them without searching.

But to fall into closer particulars: it will be necessary to inquire what effects of adversity are common to both the sound and the unsound, and then what are proper to either in this close trial by adversity.

SECT. II.

It will be expedient to the design I manage in this discourse to shew, in the first place, what are the common effects of adversity to both the godly and ungodly. In some things they differ not, but as it is with the one, so also with the other.

1. Both the godly and ungodly may fear adversity before it comes. A wicked man cannot, and it is evident many godly men do not, come up to the height of that rule, *James* i. 2. 'To account it all joy when they fall into diverse temptations,' or trials by adversity.

It is said, *Isa.* xxxiii. 14. 'The sinners in Sion are afraid; trembling surprizeth the hypocrite;' namely, under the apprehension of approaching calamities. It is true also, the saints in Sion may be afraid: 'My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments,' said holy David, *Psal.* cxix. 120, and *Job* iii. 23. 'The thing which I greatly feared (saith that upright soul) is come upon me.' There is a vast difference betwixt a saint first meeting with afflictions, and his parting with them. He

entertains them sometimes with tremblings; he parts with them rejoicing, smiling on them, and blessing them in the name of the Lord. So that by this the upright and the false heart are not discriminated; even sanctified nature declines sufferings and troubles.

2. Both the godly and ungodly may entertain afflictions with regret and unwillingness when they come. Afflictions and troubles are wormwood and gall, *Lam.* iii. 19, and that goes not down presently with flesh and blood, *Heb.* xii. 11. 'No affliction for the present seemeth joyous, but grievous:' he means to God's own people. They are in heaviness through manifold temptations or trials by the rod, *1 Pet.* i. 6. When God gives the cup of affliction into the hands of the wicked, how do they reluctate and loathe it? And though the portion of the saints' cup be much sweeter than theirs (for that bitter ingredient of God, vindictive wrath is not in it) yet even they shrink from it and are loth to taste it.

3. Both the one and the other may be impatient and fretful in adversity. It is the very nature of flesh and blood to be so. 'The wicked are like the troubled sea which cannot rest, whose waters cast forth mire and dirt,' *Isa.* lvii. 20. It is an allusion to the unstable and stormy ocean. You know there is naturally an estuation and working in the sea, whether it be incensed by the wind or no; but if a violent wind blow upon the unquiet ocean, O what a raging and foaming is there! what abundance of trash and filth doth it at such times cast out!

Now, though grace make a great difference betwixt one and another, yet I dare not say, but even a gracious heart may be very unquiet and tumultuous in the day of affliction. Sanctified souls have their passions and lusts, which are too little morti-

fied. Jonah was a good man, yet his soul was sadly distempered by adverse providences; *Jonah* iv. 9, 'Yea, (saith he, and that to his God) I do well to be angry, even unto death.'

4. Both the one and the other may be weary of the rod, and think the day of adversity a tedious day, wishing it were once at an end. 'Babylon shall be weary of the evil that God will bring upon it.' O that none of Sion's children were weary of adversity too! How sad a moan doth Job make of his long continued affliction, *Job* xvi. 6, 7. 'Though I speak, my grief is not assuaged; and though I forbear, what am I eased? But now he hath made me weary.'

And if you look into *Psalms* vi. 3, 6. you may see another strong christian tired in the way of afflictions: 'My soul, (saith David in that place) is sore vexed, but thou, O Lord, how long? I am weary with groaning.'

5. Both the one and the other may be driven to their knees by adversity. 'Lord, in trouble have they visited thee; they have poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them,' *Isa.* xxvi. 16. Not that a godly person will pray no longer than the rod is at his back. O no, he cannot live without prayer long, how few calls soever he hath to that duty by the rod. But when the rod is on his back, he will be more frequently and more fervently upon his knees. Indeed many graceless hearts are like children's tops, which will go no longer than they are whipt; they cannot find their knees and their tongues, till God find a rod to excite them. A dangerous symptom! The same affliction may put a gracious, and a graceless soul to their knees; but though in the external matter of duty, and in the external call or occasion of duty they seem to agree, yet is there a vast difference in the principles, manners, and ends of these their

duties; as will evidently appear in its proper place in our following discourse.

But by what has been said in this section, you may see how in some things the holy, upright soul acts too much like the unsanctified, and in other things how much the hypocrite may act like a saint. He may be *externally* humbled; so was Ahab. He may pray under the rod, *Mal. ii. 13*, yea, and request others to pray for him; so did Simon, *Acts viii. 24*.

SECT. III.

But though the sound and unsound heart differ not in some external carriages under the rod, yet there are effects of adversity which are proper to either, and will discriminate them. To which end let us first see what effects adversity is usually followed withal in unsound and carnal hearts, and we shall find among others, these five symptoms of an evil heart appearing under crosses and afflictions.

1. A graceless heart is not quickly and easily brought to see the hand of God in those troubles that befall it, and be duly affected with it. *Isa. xxvi. 11*. "Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see:" when it has smitten, or is lifted up to smite, they shut their eyes. It is the malice of this man, or the negligence of that, or the unfaithfulness of another, that hath brought all this trouble upon me. Thus the creature is the horizon that terminates their sight, and beyond that they usually see nothing. Sometimes, indeed, the hand of God is so immediately manifested, and convincingly discovered in afflictions, that they cannot avoid the sight of it; and then they may (in their way) pour out a prayer before him. But ordinarily they impute all to second causes, and overlook the first cause of their troubles.

2. Nor is it usual with these men under the rod to retire into their closets, and search their hearts there, to find out the particular cause and provocation of their affliction. *No man repented him of his wickedness, saying what have I done? Jer. viii. 6.* What cursed thing is there with me, that hath thus increased the anger of God against me? God visits their iniquities with afflictions, but they visit not their own hearts by self-examination. God judges them, but they judge not themselves: He shews their iniquities in a clear glass, but none saith, What have I done? This phrase, What have I done, is the voice of one that recollects himself after a rash action; or the voice of a man astonished at the discovery afflictions make of his sins, but no such voice as this is ordinarily heard among carnal men.

3. An unsound professor, if left to his choice, would rather choose sin than affliction. He sees more evil in the latter than in the former.

And it cannot be doubted, if we consider the principle by which the unregenerate are actuated, is *sense*, not *faith*. Hence Job's friends would have argued his hypocrisy, *Job xxxvi. 21.* And had their application been as right as their rule, it would have concluded it; "This (viz. sin) hast thou chosen, rather than affliction."

I do not say that an upright man cannot commit a moral evil to escape a *penal* evil. O that daily observation did not too plentifully furnish us with sad instances of that kind! But upright ones do not, dare not, upon a serious, deliberate discussion and debate, chuse sin rather than affliction. What they may do upon surprisals, and in the violence of temptation, is of another nature.

But a false and unsound heart discovers itself in the choice it makes upon deliberation, and that frequently when sin and trouble come in competi-

tion. "Put the case," says *Augustine*, "a ruffian should with one hand set the cup of drunkenness to thy mouth, and with the other a dagger to thy breast, and say, Drink or die : thou shouldst rather chuse to die sober, than to live a drunkard." Many christians have resisted unto blood, striving against sin, and with renowned Moses, chosen affliction, the worst of afflictions, yea death itself in the most formidable appearance, rather than sin. It is the *habitual* temper and resolution of every gracious heart so to do, though those holy resolutions are sometimes overborne by violence of temptation.

But the hypocrite dreads less the defilement of his soul, than the loss of his estate, liberty, or life. If you ask, upon what ground then doth the apostle suppose, 1 *Cor.* xiii. 3. a man may give his body to be burnt, and not have charity ? The answer is at hand. They that chuse death in the sense of this text, do not chuse it to escape sin, but to feed and indulge it. Those strange adventures (if any such be) are rather to maintain their own honour, and enrol their names among worthy and famous persons to posterity ; or out of a blind zeal to their espoused errors and mistakes, than in a due regard to the glory of God, and preservation of integrity. "I fear to speak it, but it must be spoken, (says *Jerome*) that even martyrdom itself, when suffered for admiration and applause, profits nothing."

4. It is the property of an unregenerate soul, under adversity, to turn from creature to creature for support and comfort, and not from every creature to God alone. So long as their feet can touch ground, I mean, feel any creature relief or comfort under them, they can subsist and live in afflictions ; but when they lose ground, when all creature refuge fails, then their hearts fail too.

Thus *Zedekiah*, and the self-deceiving Jews, when they saw their own strength failed them, and

there was little hope left that they should deliver themselves from the Chaldeans, what do they in that strait? Do they with upright Jehosophat say, "Our eyes are unto thee?" No, their eyes were upon Egypt for succour, not upon heaven. Well, "Pharaoh and his aids are left still, all hope is not gone," *Jer.* xxxvii. 9. See the like in Ahaz, in sore distress he courts the king of Assyria for help, *2 Chron.* xxvii. 22, 23. That project failing, why then he will try what the gods of Damascus can do for him. Any way, rather than the right way.

So it is with many others. If one child die, what do they do? Run to God, and comfort themselves in this, "The Lord liveth though my child die?" If an estate be lost, and a family sinking, do they with David comfort themselves in the everlasting covenant, ordered and sure? No, but if one relation die, there is another alive. If an estate be gone, yet not all; something is left still, and the case will mend.

As long as ever such men have any visible encouragement, they will hang upon it, and not make up all in Christ, and encourage themselves in the Lord. To tell them of rejoicing in the Lord, when the fig-tree blossoms not, is what they cannot understand.

5. To conclude; an unsound heart never comes out of the furnace of affliction purged, mortified, and more spiritual and holy than when he was cast into it. His scum and dross is not there separated from him. Nay, the more he is afflicted, the worse he is. "Why should ye be smitten any more? ye will revolt more and more," *Isa.* i. 5. And to keep our metaphor, consult *Jer.* vi. 29. God hath put that incorrigible people into the furnace of affliction, and kept them long in that fire: and what was the issue? Why, saith the prophet, "The bellows are burnt, the lead is consumed of the fire, the

founder melteth in vain, &c. ; reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them."

If the fire of affliction be continually blown till the very bellows be burnt, that is, the tongue, or rather lungs of the prophet, though these he even spent in reproving and threatening, and denouncing woe upon woe, and judgment upon judgment, and God fulfils his word upon them; yet still they are as before. The dross remains, though Jerusalem be made a furnace, and the inhabitants boiling in it over a fierce fire of affliction. Yet as it is noted (pertinently to my discourse) in *Ezek. xxvi. 13.* *The scum remains with them*, and cannot be separated by the fire. The reason is plain, because no affliction in itself purges sin, but as it is sanctified, and works in the virtue of God's blessing, and in pursuance of the promises.

O think on this you that have had thousands of afflictions in one kind and another, and none of them all have done you good ! They have not mortified, humbled, or benefitted you at all. Thus you see what the effects of adversity are, when it meets a graceless heart.

SECT. IV.

By this time, reader, I suppose thou art desirous to know what effects adversity and affliction have when they meet with an honest and sincere heart. Before I come to particulars, however, I think it needful to acquaint thee, that the fruits of afflictions are mostly *after-fruits*, and not so discernible by the christian himself under the rod, as after he hath been exercised by it, *Heb. xii. 11*, and calmly reflects upon what is past. Nor doth every christian attain the same measure and degree. Some rejoice, others commonly submit. But I think these seven

effects are ordinarily found in all upright hearts that pass under the rod.

1. The sincere and upright soul betakes itself to God in affliction. *Job* i. 20. When God was smiting, *Job* was praying; when God afflicted, *Job* worshipped. So David, *Psalms* cxvi. 3, 4. "I found sorrow and trouble, then called I upon the name of the Lord." And when the messenger of Satan buffeted Paul, *For this cause*, saith he, *I besought the Lord thrice*, 2 *Cor.* xii. 8. Alas! whither should a child go in distress, but to its father?

2. He sees and owns the hand of God in his afflictions, how much or little soever of the instruments of trouble appear. *The Lord hath taken away*, saith *Job*, *Job* i. 21. *God hath hidden him*, saith David, 2 *Sam.* xvi. 10. If the blow come from the hand of a wicked man, yet he sees that wicked hand in God's righteous hand, *Psalms* xvii. 14. And this apprehension is fundamental to all that communion men have with God in their afflictions, and to all that peaceableness and gracious submission of their spirits under the rod. He that sees nothing of God in his troubles, hath nothing of God in his soul.

3. He can justify God in all the afflictions and troubles that come upon him, be they ever so severe. 'Thou art just in all that is brought upon us,' saith Nehemiah, *Nehem.* ix. 33. "Thou hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve," saith Ezra, *Ezra* ix. 13. "It is of the Lord's mercy we are not consumed," saith the church, *Lam.* iii. 22. Are we in Babylon? it is a mercy we are not in hell. If God condemn him, yet he will justify God; if God cast him into a sea of trouble, yet he will acknowledge, in all that sea of trouble, there is not one drop of injustice. If I have not deserved such usage from the hands of men, yet I have deserved worse than this at the hands of God.

4. Afflictions melt and humble gracious hearts.— There is an habitual tenderness planted in their spirits, and a just occasion quickly draws it forth.— And so usual a thing it is for gracious hearts to be humbled under the afflictings of God, that affliction is upon that score called humiliation. The effect is put for the cause, to shew where one is, the other will be, *2 Cor. xii. 21. My God will humble me*, that is, he will afflict me with the sight of your sin and disorders. And, if a gracious soul be so apt to be humbled for other men's sins, much more for his own.

5. The upright soul is inquisitive, under the rod, to find out that evil for which the Lord contends with him by affliction. *Job. x. 2. "Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me;"* And *Job xxxiv. 31. "That which I see not, teach thou me; I have done iniquity, I will do no more."* So *Lam. iii. 39, 40. "Let us search and try our ways and turn again to the Lord."* In afflicting God searches them, and under afflictions they search themselves. Willing they are to hear the voice of the rod, and glad of any discovery it makes of their hearts.

The upright heart chuseth to lie under affliction, rather than be delivered from it by sin. I say this is the choice and resolution of every upright heart, however it may be sometimes overborne by the violence of temptation, *Heb. xi. 35. Not accepting deliverance*, viz. upon sinful terms and conditions.

They are sensible how the flesh smarts under the rod, but had rather it should smart, than conscience should smart under guilt. "Affliction," saith an upright soul, "grieves me, but sin will grieve God; affliction wounds my soul. Deliverance I long for, but I will not pay so dear for it, how much so ever I desire it. Outward ease is sweet, but inward peace is sweeter."

7. He prizeth the spiritual good gotten by affliction above deliverance from it, and can bless God from his heart for those mercies, how dear soever 'his flesh hath paid for them. *Psalm* cxix. 67, and 71. *It is good for me that I have been afflicted.* Such is the value, the people of God have for spiritual graces, that they cannot think them dear, what ever their flesh hath paid for them. The mortification of one lust, one discovery of sincerity, one manifestation of God to their souls, doth much more than make amends for all that they have endured under the rod.

Is patience improved, self-acquaintance increased, the vanity of the creature more effectually taught, longings after heaven inflamed? O blessed afflictions, that are attended with such blessed fruits! It was the saying of a holy man, under a sore trouble for the death of an only son, when in that dark day God had graciously manifested himself to his soul, "O, I would be contented (if it were possible) to lay an only son in the grave, every day I have to live in the world, for one such discovery of the love of God as I now enjoy!"



CHAP. VII.

Shewing what proof or trial is made of the soundness or unsoundness of our graces by the duties of religion which we perform.

SECT. I.

WE now come (according to the method proposed) to make trial of the truth or falseness of grace, by the duties we daily perform in religion. And certainly, they also have the use and efficacy of fire, for this discovery, 1 *John* ii. 4, 5. 'He that saith

I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him: but whose keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected. And hereby know we that we are in him.'

This is a practical lie of which the apostle speaks here; by which men deceive others for a while, and themselves for ever: a lie not spoken, but done, when a man's course of life contradicts his profession. The life of an hypocrite is but one long or continued lie; he saith or professeth he knows God, but takes no care at all to obey him in the duties he commands. He either neglects them, or if he performs them, it is not as God requires. If they 'draw nigh to him with their lips, yet their heart is far from him,' *Isa.* xxix. 13. 'Thou art near in their mouth, but far from their reins.' *Jer.* xii. 2.

There are some that feel the influence and power of their communion with the Lord in duties, going down to their very reins; and there are others, whose lips and tongues only are touched with religion.

This is an age of light and much profession.—Men cannot now keep up a reputation in the sober and professing world, whilst they set down, and totally neglect the duties of religion; but surely, if men would be but just to themselves, their very performances of duty would tell them what their hearts are.

SECT. II.

THERE are, among others, these following particulars, that do very clearly shew the difference between the sound and the unsound professor.

1. The designs and true aims of men's hearts in duty, will tell them what they are.

An hypocrite aims low; *Hos.* vii. 14. "They have not cried to me with their hearts when they

howled upon their beds; they assemble themselves for corn and wine, and they rebel against me." It is not for Christ and pardon, for mortification and holiness, but for corn and wine. Thus they make a market of religion. All their ends in duty are either carnal, natural, or legal. It is either to accommodate their carnal ends, or satisfy and quiet their consciences, and so their duties are performed as a sin-offering to God.

But an upright heart hath very high and pure aims in duty; 'The desire of their souls is God,' *Isa.* xxvi. 8. 'Their soul follows hard after God,' *Psal.* lxiii. 8. 'One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I might dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to see the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.' *Psal.* xxvii. 4. These are the true eagles that play at the sun, and will not stoop to low and earthly objects. Alas! if the enjoyment of God be missed in a duty, it is not the greatest enlargements of gifts will satisfy. He comes back, like a man that has taken a long journey, to meet his friend upon important business, and lost his labour. His friend was not there.

2. The engagements of men's hearts to God in duties, will tell them what they are. The hypocrite takes little heed to his heart, *Isa.* xxxix. 13. They are not afflicted really for the hardness, deadness, unbelief, and wanderings of their hearts in duty, as upright ones are; nor do they engage their hearts, and labour to draw near unto God in duty, as his people do. 'I have intreated thy favour with my whole heart,' saith David, *Psal.* cxix. 58. They are not pleased in duty until they feel their hearts stand towards God, like a bow in its full bent. I say not that it is always so with them; what would they give that it might be so? But, surely,

if their souls in duty be empty of God, they are filled with trouble and sorrow.

3. The conscience men make of secret, as well as public duties, will tell them what their hearts and graces are ; whether true or false. A vain professor is curious in the former, and either negligent, or at best formal in the latter ; for he finds no inducements of honour, applause, or ostentation of gifts, externally moving him to them ; nor hath he any experience of the sweetness and benefit of such duties internally, to allure and engage his soul to them.

The hypocrite therefore is not for the closet, but the synagogue, *Matth.* vi. 5, 6. Not but that education, example, or the impulse of conscience, may sometimes drive him thither, but it is not his daily delight to be there. It is not his meat and drink to retire from the clamour of the world, to enjoy God in secret. The observation of their duties, is the great inducement to these men to perform them, and ‘verily,’ saith our Lord, *ver.* 2, ‘they have their reward ;’ this is all the benefit and advantage they derive from religion. Much good may it do them with their applause and honour. Let them make much of that airy reward, for it is all that ever they shall have.

But now for a soul truly gracious, he cannot long subsist without secret prayer. It is true, there is not always an equal freedom and delight, a like enlargement and comfort in those retirements ; but yet he cannot be without them. He finds the want of his secret, in his public duties. If he and his God have not met in secret, and had some communion in the morning, he sensibly finds it, in the deadness and unprofitableness of his heart and life, all the day after.

4. The spirituality of our duties tries the sincerity of our graces. An unregenerate heart is car-

nal, whilst engaged in duties that are spiritual. Some men deceive themselves in thinking they are spiritual men, because their employment and calling is about spiritual things, *Hosea* ix. 7. This indeed gives them the denomination, but not the frame of spiritual men. Others judge themselves spiritual persons because they frequently perform and attend upon spiritual duties. But, alas! the heart and state may be carnal notwithstanding all this. O, my friends, it is not enough that the object of your duties is spiritual, that they respect an holy God; nor that the matter be spiritual, that you be conversant about holy things; but the frame of your heart must be spiritual; an heavenly temper of soul is necessary, and what are the most heavenly duties without it?

The end and design you aim at must be spiritual; it must be the enjoyment of God, and a growing conformity to him in holiness; else, multiply duties as the sand on the sea-shore, and they all will not amount to one evidence of your sincerity.—‘God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit,’ saith the apostle, *Rom.* i. 9. He seems to appeal to God in this matter. “I serve God in my spirit, and God knows that I do so. I dare appeal to him that it is so. He knows that my heart is with him, or would be with him in my duties. The arms of my faith do either sensibly grasp, or are stretched out towards him in my duties.” O how little favour do gracious hearts find in the most excellent duties, if God and their souls do not sensibly meet in them!

Certainly, reader, there is a time when God comes nigh to men in duty; when he deals familiarly with men, and sensibly fills their souls with unusual powers and delights. The near approaches of God to their souls are felt by them, (for souls have their sense as well as bodies) and now are

their minds abstracted and marvellously refined, from all that is material and earthly, and swallowed up in spiritual excellencies and glories.

These are the real foretastes of glory, which no man can, by words, make another to understand, as he himself doth that feels them.

These seasons, I confess, do but rarely occur to the best of christians, nor continue long when they do.* Alas! this wine is too strong for such weak bottles as we are. "Hold, Lord," an holy man said once, "thy poor creature is a clay vessel, and can contain no more." This is that joy unspeakable, and full of glory, which is mentioned 1 *Pet.* i. 7, 8; something that words cannot describe.—These seasons are the golden spots of our lives, when we are admitted to these near and ineffable views and tastes of God. Possibly some poor christians can say but little to these things. Their sorrows are exercised in duties more than their joys. They are endeavouring to mount, but the stone hangs at the heel. They assay, but cannot rise to that height that others do, who are got up by their labouring faith into the upper region, and there display their wings, and sing in the sun beams. But though they cannot reach this height, yet they have no satisfaction in duties, wherein there is no intercourse betwixt God and their souls.

That which contents another will not content a christian. If the king be absent, men will bow to the empty chair; but if God be absent, an empty duty gives no satisfaction to a gracious spirit. The poorest christian is found panting after God by sincere desires, and labouring to bring that dead and vain heart near to God in duty, though, alas! it is many times but the rolling of the returning stone

* It is a sweet hour, and 'tis but an hour; a thing of short continuance. The relish of it is exceeding sweet, but it is not often that Christians taste it. BERNARD.

against the hill; yet he never expects advantage by that duty wherein the spirit of God is not. Nor doth he expect the Spirit of God should be where his own spirit is not.

6. Assiduity and constancy, in the duties of religion, make a notable discovery of the soundness or rottenness of men's hearts. The hypocrite may shew some zeal and forwardness in duties for a time, but he will jade and give out at length. *Job xxvii. 10.* 'Will he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God?' No, he will not. If his motions in religion were natural, they would be constant; but they are artificial, and he is moved by external inducements, and so must needs be off and on. He prays himself weary of praying, and hears himself weary of hearing. His heart is not delighted in his duties, and therefore his duties must needs grow stale and dry to him after a while. There be three seasons, in which the zeal of an hypocrite may be inflamed in duties.

First, When some imminent danger threatens him; some severe rod of God is shaken over him.

"When he slew them, then they sought him and returned and enquired early after God." *Psalm lxxviii. 34.* O the goodly words they give, the fair promises they make! and yet all the while *they do but flatter him with their lips, and lie unto him with their tongues*; ver. 36, 37. For let but that danger pass over, and the heavens clear up again, and he will restrain prayer, and return to his old course again.

Secondly, When the times countenance and favour religion, O what a zeal will he have for God! So in the stoney ground, *Matth. xiii. 5*, the seed sprung up and flourished 'till the sun of persecution arose, and then it faded away, for it had no depth of earth; no deep, solid, inward work, or principle of grace to maintain it.

Thirdly, When self-ends and designs are accommodated, and promoted by these things. This was the case of Jehu, 2 *Kings* x. 15. *Come see my zeal!* For what? For a base self-interest; not for God. How fervently will some men pray, preach, and profess, whilst they sensibly feel the incomes and profits of these duties to their flesh; whilst they are admired and applauded!

These external incentives will put an hypocrite into an hot fit of zeal; but then, as it is with a man, whose colours are raised by the heat of the fire, and not by the healthfulness of a good constitution, it soon fades and falls again.

But, blessed be God, it is not so with all. The man whose heart is upright with his God, will *keep judgment, and do righteousness at all times*, *Psalms* cvi. 3. Whether dangers threaten or no; whether the times favour religion or know; whether his earthly interest be promoted by it or no; he will be holy still, he will not part with his duties when they are stript naked of those external advantages. As the addition of these things to religion did not at first engage him, so the subtraction of them, cannot disengage him.

If his duty become his reproach, yet Moses will not forsake it, *Heb.* xi. 26. If he lose his company, and be left alone, yet Paul will not flinch from his duty, 2 *Tim.* iv. 16. If hazard surround duty on every side, yet Daniel will not quit it, *Dan.* vi. 10, for they considered these things at first, and counted the cost. They still find religion is rich enough to pay the cost of all that they can lose, or suffer for its sake; yea, and that with an hundred-fold reward now in this life. They never had any other design in engaging in religious duties, but to help them to heaven; and if they recover heaven at last, whether the way to it prove better or worse, they have their design and ends.

Therefore they will be stedfast, *always abounding in the work of the Lord*, as knowing their labour is not vain in the Lord, 1 Cor. xv. end.

6. The humility and self-denial of our hearts in duties will try what they are for their integrity and sincerity towards God. Doth a man boast his own excellencies in prayer, as the pharisee did, *Luke xviii. 10, 11*, "God, I thank thee I am not as other men!" Which he speaks not in an humble acknowledgment of the grace of God, which distinguishes man from man, but in a proud ostentation of his own excellencies; doth a man make his duties his saviours, and trust to them in a vain confidence of their worth and dignity: *Luke xviii. 9*. Surely *his heart, which is thus lifted up within him, is not upright*, *Hab. ii. 4*. But if the heart be upright indeed, it will express its humility, especially in its duties, wherein it approaches the great and holy God.

First, It will manifest its humility, in those awful and reverential apprehensions it hath of God, as Abraham did, *Gen. xviii. 27*. 'And now I that am but dust and ashes (saith he) have taken upon me to speak unto God.' The humility of Abraham's spirit is, in some measure, to be found in all Abraham's children.

Secondly, In those low and vile thoughts, they have of themselves and their religious performances. Thus that poor penitent, *Luke vii, 38*, stood behind Christ weeping. *Yet the dogs eat the crumbs*, saith another, *Mark vii. 28*. *I am more brutish than any man*, saith a third, *Prov. xxx. 7*. *I abhor myself in dust and ashes*, saith a fourth, *Job xlii. 6*, and as little esteem they have for their performances, *Isa. lxiv. 6*. *All our righteousness are as filthy rags*. I deny not but there is pride and vanity in the most upright ones; but what place soever it finds in their converses

with men, it finds little room in their converses with God; or if it doth, they loathe it, and themselves for it.

Thirdly, But especially their humility in duty is discovered in renouncing all their duties in point of dependence, and relying entirely upon Christ for righteousness and acceptance. They have special regard to duties in point of obedience, but none at all in point of reliance.

7. The communion and intercourse which is betwixt God and men in duties, specially discovers what their persons and graces are. And it must needs do so, because what communion soever the hypocrite hath with duties, or with saints in duties, to be sure he hath none with God.

None can come nigh to God in duty, but those that are made nigh by reconciliation. All special communion with Christ is founded in real union with Christ; but *the wicked are estranged from the womb, Psalm lviii. 3.*

But now there is real communion betwixt God and his people, in duties. *Truly our fellowship, our communion, is with the Father and Son, 1 John i. 3.* God pours forth of his Spirit upon them, and they pour forth 'heir hearts to God. It is sensibly manifested to them when the Lord comes nigh to their souls in duty, and as sensible they are of his retreats and withdrawments from their souls, *Cant. iii. 1, 4.* They that never felt any thing of this nature, may call it a fancy, but the Lord's people are abundantly satisfied of the reality thereof.

Their very countenance is altered by it, *1 Sam. i. 18.* The sad and cloudy countenance of Hannah cleared up, as soon as she knew she had audience and acceptance with her God. I know all communion with God doth not consist in joys and comforts: there is a real communion with God in the mortifying and humbling influences of his spirit

upon men, as in the cheering and refreshing influences thereof. I know also there is a great diversity in the degrees and measures thereof. It is not alike in all christians, nor with the same christian at all times. But that real christians have true and real communion with God in their duties, is a truth as manifest in the spiritual sense and experience of the saints, as their communion is with one another.

8. Growth and improvement of grace in duties, constitutes another great difference between the sound and the unsound heart. All the duties in the world will never make an hypocrite more holy, humble, or heavenly than he is; but will, like the watering of a dry stick, sooner rot it, than make it flourishing and fruitful. What was Judas the better for all those heavenly sermons, prayers, and discourses of Christ which he heard? And what will thy soul be the better, for all the duties thou performest weekly and daily, if thy heart be unsound? It is plain from *Job* xv. 4, there must be an implantation into Christ, before there can be an improvement in fruitful obedience. And it is as plain from 1 *John* ii. 14, that the virtues of ordinances must *remain*; the efficacy and power that we sometimes feel under them, must *abide* and *remain* in the heart *afterwards*; or we cannot grow, and be made fruitful by them.

But the false professor is neither rooted in Christ by union with him, nor doth, nor can retain the virtue of ordinances within him. He is like one that views his face in a glass, and quickly forgets what manner of man he was. His head indeed may grow, his knowledge may increase, but he hath a dead and withered heart.

But as the saints have real communion with God in duties, so they do make improvements answerable thereunto. There is certainly a ripening of

their graces that way ; a changing or gradual transformation from glory to glory ; a springing up to the full stature of the man in Christ. " They that are planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God," *Psal. xcii. 13, 14.* 1 *Pet ii. 2.* They grow more and more judicious, experienced, humble, mortified, and heavenly, by conversing with the Lord so frequently in his appointments.

There is, I confess, a more discernible growth and ripening in some christians, than in others.—The faith of some grows exceedingly, 2 *Thess. i. 3*, others more slowly, *Heb. v. 12*, but yet there are improvements of grace in all upright ones.—Habits are more deeply rooted, or fruits of obedience more increased.

If any upright soul be stumbled at this, as not being able to discern the increase of his graces, after all his duties; let such consider, the growth of grace is discerned as the growth of plants is, which we perceive rather to have grown, than to grow. Compare time past and present, and you may see it. But usually our eager desires after more, make us overlook what we have as nothing.

9. The assistances and influences of the Spirit in duties, shews us what we are. No vital, sanctifying influences can fall upon carnal hearts, in duties.—The Spirit *helps not their infirmities, nor makes intercession for them with groanings which cannot be uttered*; as he doth for his own people, *Rom. viii. 26, 27.* They have his assistances in the way of *common gifts*, but not in the way of *special grace*. He may enable them to preach judiciously, not experimentally ; to pray orderly and neatly, not feelingly, believingly, and broken-heartedly ; " For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God," *Rom. 14, viii.* He never so assists, but where he has first sanctified. Car-

nal men furnish the materials of their duties out of the strength of their parts; a strong memory, a good invention, are the fountains whence they draw.

But it is otherwise with souls truly gracious. They have ordinarily a threefold assistance from the Spirit, in reference to their duties.

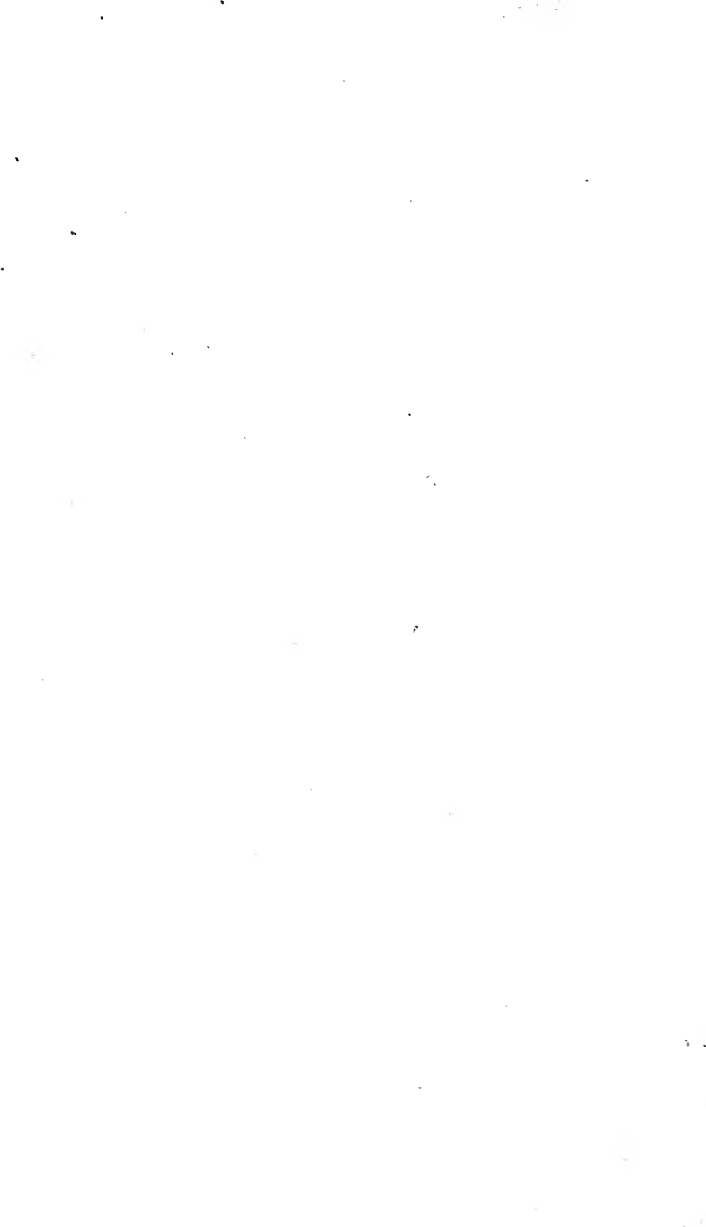
First, Before duties; exciting them to it, making them feel their need of it, like the call of an empty stomach, *Psalm* xxvii. 8. 'Thou saidst, seek my face; my heart answered, thy face, Lord, will I seek.'

Secondly, In their duties; furnishing both matter and affection, as in that text lately cited, *Rom.* viii. 26, guiding them not only what to ask, but how to ask.

Thirdly, After their duties; helping them not only to suppress the pride and vanity of their spirits, but also to wait on God for the accomplishment of their desires.

Now though all these things, wherein the sincerity of our hearts is tried in duties, be found in great variety, as to degrees, among saints, yet they are mysteries unknown by experience to other men.

FINIS.



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